

**Bond University**

## **MASTER'S THESIS**

**Integrity and Selflessness.**

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*Award date:*  
2017

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# **Integrity and Selflessness**

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M.A. Communication Art/Philosophy

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Philosophy

February, 2017

Faculty of Society and Design

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the relationship between integrity and selflessness. The research is based on philosophical work by Nancy Schaubert, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Aristotle, Aquinas, Alasdair MacIntyre and others. Using this work, I argue that the relationship between the two conditions of human nature, selflessness, and integrity, is critical to the good life. I argue that to live selflessly and with integrity is our best chance of being happy. Living a selfless life of integrity not only leads to personal happiness, but contributes to the happiness of others both directly (by helping and consoling others) and indirectly (by showing others how happiness is possible). I argue that this theory works in all conditions. This leads me to a concept of how happiness works in a community which I call the happiness bank. My theory is that integrity and selflessness lead both to a good and happy life, but also to a happiness bank. The happiness bank is something that individuals contribute to through other-directed good actions, and make withdrawals from when they need the help and consolation of others. Contributions by individuals increase happiness within a community and form the primary moral resource of the community. A happiness bank grows, and its contributions multiply like compound interest.

## DECLARATION BY AUTHOR

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy.

This thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no  
material that has previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any  
other Institution, except where acknowledgement is made.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to

My wife Ann Maree Zamp,

Dr. Fay Akindes

Dr. Shi Hae Kim

Joseph Pearson,

and

in the memory of Jim Carpenter.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank who have indispensably contributed to the following creation of this thesis.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Damian Cox for his kindness, patience, knowledge, and invaluable instruction in helping me uncover the process throughout this entire thesis. I would also like to thank my associate supervisor Daniel Brennan.

I would also like to thank Ms. Shirley Brown BA (Hons) PGCE, RSA Dip, TEFLA, MA (TESOL) for invaluable help in all the years leading up to this completion.

In addition, I would like to thank the staff of Bond University Library for their tireless support and never-failing smiles throughout my journey

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Ann Maree Zamp for all her loving support.

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# INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to argue for the role of integrity and selflessness in a good life. A good life produced in this way is very robust. It remains a good life in the face of many uncertainties and vicissitudes. This is also the basis, I argue, for something I call the happiness bank. The concept of the happiness bank is of a repository of the good deeds and virtuous actions that we perform towards others. It can never become full enough and it establishes the moral foundation of a community. It is something that grows as people contribute to it. It bears interest and it enables withdrawals. It works like a bank and it enables the ill, the disabled, the marginalized, the abandoned and the downtrodden to have an honoured place in society.

The thesis consists of five chapters. In chapter one, I set out my account of integrity. I do so through a critical examination of the views of Nancy Schaubert. In chapter two, I set out my account of selflessness. I do this through an examination of the utilitarian thought of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. In chapter three, I turn to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre. I argue that he gives a distinctive account of the virtues of acknowledged dependence and that an account of selflessness and its role in the happiness is built on this foundation. In chapter four, I examine the relationship between virtue and happiness, working with Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas. In the final chapter, I elaborate my concept of the happiness bank.

The argument strategy of the thesis proceeds in three stages. The first stage is to establish the plausibility of a particular conception of integrity and another conception of selflessness. Integrity, I argue, is best thought of in moral terms. It is a disposition to do the next right thing. This is a conceptual claim. Selflessness is most plausibly thought of as putting others ahead of oneself. This is to say that a selfless person orientates their life towards things that have value for others before things that have value only for themselves (for example, their own pleasures). This is another conceptual claim. The second stage of the argument relates integrity and selflessness to happiness. The claim here is that living with integrity and selflessness offers by far the best chance for human happiness. This is an empirical claim, one based on my own experience and reading. It is a proposal for future empirical research rather than a definitive philosophical conclusion. The third stage of the argument is the introduction of a new idea about how communities flourish, given the argument of the first two stages of the thesis. This is the idea of the 'happiness bank'. A happiness bank is based on virtuous activity done by people in a

community for other people because they have integrity and selfless ideas about how things should be done for others in society. This is essentially a normative claim. It is a claim about how we ought to act towards each other.

# CHAPTER 1: INTEGRITY

## INTRODUCTION TO ROLE OF INTEGRITY

In the present chapter, I examine the role of Integrity in a life well lived. I will argue that Integrity is a vital ingredient of a good life. Nancy Schauber argues in ‘Integrity, Commitment and the Concept of a Person’ (1996) that integrity is not worth striving for. It is either something that we possess simply in virtue of being a person or it is not worth having at all. I argue that Schauber is wrong about this. When we understand integrity correctly, it is not only clearly an essential ingredient in a good life, but also something we must work at, to keep. Integrity is much discussed in the philosophical literature (Calhoun (1995); Cox, La Caze and Levine (2003); Halfon (1989); McFall (1987); Taylor (1981); Williams (1973).) I have chosen to highlight Schauber’s work on integrity because it crystalizes just what I think goes wrong with concepts of integrity that fail to take into account virtues as constitutive of integrity.

To argue for this, it is important to establish the meaning of the term ‘Integrity’. Integrity is sometimes defined as being true to your word, true to a set of principles, and true to your promises and commitments, even when it may be difficult to be true to them. However, this definition misses something important. It misses the fact that the principle we abide by must be directed towards what is valuable to others, not just to ourselves, otherwise, integrity becomes something self-centered and isolating, and eventually a cause of unhappiness and even misery. I have developed this point by arguing that genuine integrity requires selflessness, not merely to be thoughtful of others, but thinking of others’ needs first. Ultimately, I wish to argue that happiness emerges within a life that is lived for others with genuine integrity. This is a life of honesty and commitment to the needs of others before my own.

Nancy Schauber (1996) has tried to develop a new idea about what integrity means. Schauber argues that integrity is not a virtue, and that it is not something worth striving for. She dismisses the idea that integrity is a matter of remaining true to moral virtues, saying that this collapses into the idea of virtue per se and that the idea of integrity adds nothing to this. The other concept of integrity she discusses is ‘self-unifying’ integrity. She says that this kind of integrity is a matter of remaining true to one’s commitments. However, she argues, our

commitments come in two sorts: passive commitments and active commitments. To be true to our active commitments, when it is right to be so, is a matter of promise keeping. The concept of integrity adds nothing to this. To be true to our passive commitments is of no value unless the commitments remain of value to us. Once we no longer care about a passive commitment, such as a friendship, then the commitment ought not to compel our actions. It is no longer important to us. We gain and lose friendships in this manner. So integrity is either something that comes easily to us, in virtue of having commitments we care about, or it is of no value. For example, if a friendship ends, stubbornly continuing the relationship is of no value. Integrity, therefore, on her view is not an important human virtue. On her interpretation, happiness is not a byproduct of integrity. This may be the entire reason her argument is worth looking at. It will also help strengthen my argument when it comes to justifying why virtue plays such an important role in integrity. The fact that we do argue for virtue as a valuable part of any type of life, that includes faithfulness, honesty and wholeness, will show that integrity, when used in a selfless manner, is worth having. We will take the integrity argument several steps further than the Schauber argument. The reason for this is quite simple. My view of integrity is not of something self-centered. Integrity does not have one and only one person at its very core. Schauber thinks of integrity as a self-regarding condition. But integrity, in my view, focuses on commitment as a way of life to oneself *and* others.

My conception of integrity is not passive. It is active and moves us to act. When one is either taught, or learns a life of active integrity, that person is taking the right actions for all the right reasons. Usually it is based on a selfless point of view. To work for others and their benefit is an active form of integrity. So the relationship between integrity and selflessness is all about what kind of person one should be and what is the right action. To give it a more definite and practical description, selflessness, integrity, and happiness, when put together, spell out an unbeatable combination and way of life.

## **INTEGRITY AND VIRTUE**

Schauber (1996) presents many interesting claims about integrity. She says “attributing integrity to a person is arguably the most respectful praise we offer” (p. 119). Then in the very next sentence she claims, “But esteeming integrity so highly is typically based on a misunderstanding of what integrity is” (p. 119). Schauber goes on to say that this type of esteem may be the result

of assuming that one's integrity is part of a virtue. However, it is plausible to say that virtue is a very important part of integrity. Schauber questions whether or not such a virtue, of which integrity is a part, could be used as a measuring stick for our lives. She calls for caution for any person calling integrity a virtue.

I would argue a person of integrity would not, or should not, make a distinction between passive and active concerns, beliefs, projects, interests, as Schauber does. Nor should a person of integrity make such things disposable and simply direct his or her life elsewhere whenever it seems reasonable to them to do so. This is clearly a self-centered view point that has no virtue content as a component of the integrated whole self; it does not accommodate one who cares not only about the self, but about others and the betterment of mankind.

Schauber's view of integrity deprives her of a way of discriminating between first order desires – desires for various outcomes – and second order desires – desires aimed at desires. This means that a shallow and dependent person could have integrity as she understands it. Calhoun develops the point this way.

As Gabrielle Taylor argues, how one comes to endorse a first order desire matters. If a person does so only because her group does, without having any reasons for her own thinking that these are right values, then her second order volitions will not really be her own. "She/he has to find out from others which desires to identify with, or indeed what sorts of desires she should have" (*op. cit.*, p. 116). (Calhoun, 1995, p. 237).

In addition, as Taylor also observes, unless the individual regards her endorsements as *prima facie* committing her to making the same endorsements on future occasions, she will be no more than shallowly sincere, wholeheartedly identifying with one set of desire today and a different set tomorrow (*op. cit.*, p. 113) (Calhoun, p. 237).

Integrity is in part about acting on one's own views and expressing one's own agency, but it has to be much more than that. This is really where the Schaubert article misses the mark. Integrity has to be more about practical reasoning and finding meaning in all the days of one's life. That life must contain the virtues in relation to oneself before it may be distributed to others in a selfless manner. One simply must stand with one's best judgment at one's side in each instance of life. These virtues must stand as the building blocks of any type of integrity. Also this must be a part of the cornerstone of any type of life one would want to live.

### **COMMITMENT AND PROMISES:**

Schaubert's view of integrity is that it is something quite fluid and flexible, not even a component of virtue. She also makes a distinction between active and passive commitments as expressions of integrity. However, one of the major issues with this argument relates to her understanding of the importance of commitment and promising: "Active commitments, like promises, are something others have a right to require one to honor" (Schaubert, 1996, p. 120). However, she writes: "Passive commitments, by contrast, are things one finds oneself in by virtue of one's concerns" (p. 121). However, it seems plausible to say that virtue is a very important part of integrity and that persons of integrity need to be virtuous in general and that is why they would keep their commitments. We either make time for our commitments, or we make excuses for ourselves. I believe we either learn to discipline ourselves towards our fundamental commitments or we let them and thus our self-preservation fall by the wayside. In my view, when we make a promise, we are obliged to fulfill it and discharge the promise regardless of our preferences and feelings, and then we become credible. In other words, to a person who has become principled about certain things and about certain aspects of their life, promises become paramount. At the same time, because we are true to ourselves, to our commitments and to others, we have motives to make and keep promises and ultimately to uphold our integrity.

Continuing Schaubert's argument about promises, we must try to differentiate between what she calls active and passive. Schaubert claims that any "...passive commitment is essential to an adequate conception of a person, quite independent of concerns about personal integrity" (p. 121). She thinks that passive commitments are an automatic feature of being a person and are not something that we need to nurture or care about or pay special attention to. When they no longer have a grip on us, there is no reason at all why we shouldn't abandon them. I think that

this just cannot be true for anyone concerned with other people and their projects. Passive commitments mostly involve us with other people. They are friendships and relations of caring for others. To be a person who takes no special care of their passive commitments shows no deep concern for how those commitments affect others. To care about others is at the same time to care about our passive commitments, and show how we care about ourselves.

Schauber also questions why should we think that active commitment “cannot yield a plausible conception of self or consequently of integrity” (p. 121). However, I would argue that active commitments are essential to integrity. If I am to be truly committed to myself and my projects one hundred percent, then I must be committed to others and I must make good on my promises to them. My promises are part of who I am and what I stand for.

Schauber further claims that promising is merely a social practice. Here is another place to take exception. She states that it involves more than one person, “the one who makes the promise and the other who accepts it, the latter having the right to see it discharged, the right to release the promisor from the promise” (p. 121). A vow to ourselves, according to Schauber, either way, whether breaking or maintaining a promise, does not mean much. However, I would argue that a person of integrity does not necessarily make a promise either just to be in a community of promisors or to be released from the promise at a later date. A person of integrity makes promises to themselves because they take their relationship to their future self very seriously.

I question the notion, that “active commitments by themselves, being strictly performative, are not representative of the real self, so that if a person succeeds in upholding only active commitments, she has not thereby kept her real self-intact, nor does she possess integrity in any distinctive sense” (p. 123). Instead the claim is made she is “merely reliable”. I propose that when people actively continually show up for their commitments it is an act of their will. It is a form of active commitment and thus an act of integrity.

Schauber talks about passive commitments as being “features of ourselves that are for the most part, discovered, or at any rate, not directly subject to our will” (p. 123). One could conclude that it is through our commitments, our projects, and our integrity that we truly discover who we are and just who we have the potential to become. This cannot happen through the passive commitments alone.

Schauber writes regarding the passivity of integrity,

“Integrity is a trait that we would try to cultivate in ourselves. But this argument doesn’t help. For one thing, what counts as a reason for deciding on one project rather than another must be based on some antecedent sense of what is important, or what one cares about, and this is most plausibly understood as a passive commitment” (p. 123).

Schauber makes claim that “the real self is fluid” at least in the model she proposes on page 124. Moreover, in her model of life, projects, concerns, and desires need only be momentary. Mainly, she claims, because, “commitments are constitutive of one’s self only for as long as it seems reasonable to act on them” (p. 124). She also claims “we may reasonably abandon those commitments, or at least oversee the demise of them” (p. 124).

Herein lies Schauber’s mistake. The line “what one cares about” that Schauber emphasizes, turns out to be important. First of all, if we know a person who has a consistent character, we can take them as an exemplar of a strong person, a person of integrity. If we abandon our passive commitments as soon as they seem to us to diminish in importance, we are letting ourselves down and failing to set a good example for others. A person of integrity is dependable. Time after time a person of integrity will demonstrate a proven track record of being dependable. If there was an emergency, you could call on them. Others can count on them; they can count on themselves.

Is, “integrity built into our concept of a person or self” as Schauber claims on page 124? Could it be true that there is no need to work for integrity as something valuable, or even a principle that humans strive for, as she suggests?

We should not diminish the meaning of integrity. Most of us learn the significance of it at a very early age. We learn just what integrity is and what it means. We in fact follow examples of it in everyday life. These examples, as we submit to them, accompany us throughout our lives. We become accustomed to just exactly what integrity means for us and what deep meaning and selfless purpose it represents in our lives; and of course the lives of many others.

When a person is essentially divided up into a world of active and passive promises or a life that is not wholly integrated, of sound moral integrity, things like virtue required for this type



of coherence are not available. As a result a truthful and honest life built on commitment to selflessness and thereby to others, even one's nation, may not be built. So just why is it that people the world over pay attention to their obligations, responsibilities and commitments? People appear to have taken very seriously the need to live a principled and consistent life throughout history and, probably, pre-history. To live with integrity is to take one's life very seriously, but there is no way of doing this without taking one's obligations, responsibilities and commitments very seriously indeed. They should not be left to the unrestrained passive self in which passive commitments are discarded at a moment's notice.

In her 1995 article 'Standing for Something' Cheshire Calhoun does an articulate job in pointing out just why a person who is divided may never know the nuances of integrity. She discusses Harry Frankfurt.

Etymologically, integrity is related to an integer, a whole number, and to integration the unification of parts into a whole. The integrated-self picture of integrity begins from this etymological observation, and the resulting description of the person of integrity as a whole integrated self owes a good deal to Harry Frankfurt's work on freedom and responsibility. On this view, the integration of the self, and hence integrity, requires first of all that one not be a "wanton". Frankfurt imagines wantons to be individuals who either lack the capacity or simply fail to deliberate and make up their minds about which of their desires they want to be volitionally effective. As a result wantons act on which ever desire happens to be psychologically strongest at the moment. Because the wanton is passive in relation to what moves him, Frankfurt concludes, the wanton's desires are, in an important sense, not his and, as a result, neither are his actions. Such a being lacks integrity altogether (Calhoun, 1995, p. 236).

I think Frankfurt is right about this. Being a wanton is the opposite of having integrity. A person who abandons their projects because they appear to them to

have lost, perhaps for the moment, their value and meaning, is very close to a wanton. They live at the mercy of their whims.

## **VIRTUE AND HONESTY**

Schauber presents conflicting views of honesty. On the one hand, she acknowledges the moral significance of making promises. On the other hand, however, she thinks this is not important for integrity. However, let us take this just a little bit further. When one is honest one simply has principles and motivations attached to some underlying cardinal virtue that leads to many kinds of honest action, including truth telling. This way of living is authentic, motivated, and when these evaluative judgements are used on a consistent basis integrity is a part of one's life. And when others get to see the results of one's values and judgements one becomes part of a flourishing society. A principled person of integrity becomes a happy person because the actions they espouse are reflections of commitments to the self and others. Integrity, commitment and a selfless nature give a being character. Certainly the virtue of honesty when given a persistent trial will tend to produce other virtues. To honour commitments to ourselves and other people is really about becoming the honest person one would like to be.

Are there really any special circumstances, as Schauber suggests, in which a person may deceive without diminishing her integrity? Schauber makes the claim that

“...more controversial is the claim that to possess integrity is to be honest, this may not be true. If being honest entails saying what one thinks, persons of integrity are not necessarily honest. Furthermore, there are special circumstances in which a person may deceive without diminishing her integrity”. (Schauber, p. 119)

Schauber is not at all clear about this. Does she mean that the “special circumstances” in which one may deceive are situations in which one has a greater moral duty to, for instance, protect others from severe harm than one has to tell the truth? If one has a moral duty to deceive, then deception does not undermine one's integrity. Otherwise it does.

It is important for integrity to be clear and honest with oneself and others about such things as personal happiness, justice, conflicting commitments, or even conditional types of commitment that may not be ranked. Some of these commitments we acquire early in life, and

hopefully they become an integral part of our character and define the type of person we want to become. They involve things like truth telling and kindness, two very simple virtues. When kindness, truth and fidelity are combined, the idea of hurting another human through lying or deception falls by the wayside. The reason is simple, because one knows one must retain the courage of one's convictions, including one's commitment to being honest. To be the type of person who succumbs to temptation, to sell out, to deceive another for selfish reasons is certainly contrary to integrity.

If this is right, there is a close connection between being dishonest and being a sell-out. Every corrupt person is likely to be dishonest with themselves and others. Dishonesty, untruthfulness generally involves self-deception. Honesty is a cardinal virtue and must have value for its own sake. How could any person who desires true happiness not also desire truth and beneficial things it brings about, things like kindness and benevolent action towards one's fellows. Sometimes truths may become repugnant to us and hard for us to accommodate. A person may want to deceive others for the sake of their own happiness or the happiness of others. But this easy thought gives us permission to go down a slippery slope to vices. This is the worse use of the free will and a free fall of integrity that started by little habits and acts of dishonesty. Good use of the free will is certainly a part of virtue and an important aspect of morality.

Schauber considers the possibility that integrity is the same things as sincerity. She says, "Perhaps a person of integrity is sincere" (p. 119). She then goes on to say this sincerity suggests that one's words represent quite accurately what one, in fact, feels. She rightly concludes that sincerity is "evidently different from integrity" (p. 119). The reason is that merely being honest about one's feelings and emotions is not enough to ensure that one has virtue. Integrity is connected to honesty, but honesty is different from sincerity. To be sincere is to display one's inner thoughts and feelings to others. But an honest person can still keep private matters private, as long as they are not being manipulative and deceptive.

Let us try to unpack these statements a bit. As humans we cannot afford to respond merely to emotions or feelings and treat them as something we must at all costs communicate to others. What matters for integrity is the strength of your commitment, not the strength of your feelings. Our integrity must remain steadfast though any of life's difficulties, and yes, "A person of integrity is sincere" (p. 119) in one sense of "sincerity." That's not the sense in which sincerity requires us to display our thoughts and feelings to others, no matter what reason we

may not do so. Sincerity, in a different sense, involves being true to our words. We make promises, for example, sincerely, when we really mean to make them. The relationship between words and feelings is really quite simple. Words if used properly when they are sincere are a call to action, and action is a very telling word when it refers to integrity. So words are actionable and make a difference in people's lives in regard to integrity; feelings and emotions are just what they are and they pass with time. There must be some sort of first person requirement between how one acts on one's principles and the action itself. One must have sufficient cause to take right actions, for the right reasons; and thus the sincerity of those same actions become not just words or feelings but a virtuous harmonious cause. One may not feel one's way to integrity.

Schauber further quotes an article titled, "Integrity" by Gabriele Taylor, whose innermost notion of integrity, is a person who "keeps his inmost self-intact; whose life is of a piece, whose self is whole and integrated" (1981). Being true to one's commitments is a part of this self-unifying integrity. So it follows that when we say what we really mean, we are looking at someone who is quite faithful to all their principles, even in the face of adversity.

Schauber makes a dubious claim, "The core of integrity, some kind of steadfastness, is not by itself admirable, the steadfast person may be worse than someone more inconstant" (p. 120). All things considered, a steadfast person is in fact better than a changeable and unreliable person. A person of very bad values may do more harm to others because they are steadfast, but this is because of their bad values not because of their steadfastness. The two conditions of integrity that Schauber doesn't seem to ascribe to, at least in any long term view, are to have commitments and to be true to them. Integrity, virtue and a foundation in them, is about building, maintaining and putting your whole existence into a higher plane of principle and commitment, something greater than ourselves. A shifting foundation in the realm of passive commitments shows a lack of wholeness of character; being true not only to oneself but also to humanity, spells out the necessary unity of self we should seek.

Schauber claims, "There is little point in discussing integrity if it is merely identical to the sum of virtue, or any other particular virtue" (p. 120). I would argue, most people will come around to a moral way of life as a result of seeing the evidence of their own integrity and its effect on others. And why not think of integrity as the sum of virtue especially in the light of what effect it might have on others? Our evaluations of the reasons for which we act are essential for our own and humanity's flourishing, happiness and good. The most valuable concept of

integrity is the one that helps and guides us to contributing to flourishing society. I will argue this point in chapter three, when I discuss the philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre.

### **OTHER VIEWS OF INTEGRITY:**

In this section, I examine other views of integrity. The first conception I consider is Cheshire Calhoun's view. She sums it up like this.

Jim Baker, for instance, persuaded many people to invest money in doing God's work. His embezzling revealed that he had misled them either about the value of doing God's work or the value of his doing it. Neither the integrated self nor the identity picture of integrity can explain why misleading others, by itself and not because of its deleterious effects on the hypocrite, has anything to do with lacking integrity. If, however, integrity is not a merely personal virtue but the social virtue of acting on one's own judgment because doing so matters to deliberators' common interest in determining what is worth doing, then hypocritical misrepresentation of one's own best judgment clearly conflicts with integrity (Calhoun, 1995, p. 258,259).

What Calhoun means is that integrity is about standing by one's own convictions, but only because we need to work together as a community to decide what to do. According to her, integrity isn't about being virtuous, but about being socially cooperative deliberators. I don't think this is strong enough. Integrity is the quality we aim at when we try to live the best life we can aim for. This is why integrity is so important to us personally, and why it is worth striving for, and why it makes us exemplars for others.

Lynn McFall has a different conception of integrity. In her 1987 article, she sets out two different dictionary definitions of integrity as follows:

The Oxford English Dictionary, compacted, “*Integrity* means soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue, especially in relation to the truth and fair dealing; uprightness, honesty, sincerity”. The American Heritage Dictionary says that *Integrity* is “strict personal honesty and independence”. Webster’s New International Dictionary defines *Integrity* as an uncompromising adherence to a moral, artistic, or other values; utter sincerity, honesty, and candor; avoidance of deceptions, expediency, artificially, or shallowness of any kind” (p. 5).

McFall further specifies the connection between integrity and virtue. She writes:

If integrity is a moral virtue, then it is a special sort of virtue. One cannot be solely concerned with one’s own integrity, or there would be no object for one’s concern thus integrity seems to be a higher order virtue. To have moral integrity, then it is natural to suppose that one must have some lower order moral commitments; that moral integrity adds a moral requirement to personal integrity (McFall, 1987, p. 14).

McFall makes a distinction between personal integrity and moral integrity. I don’t think there is such a distinction. You either have integrity or you do not. Integrity without moral virtue would not be worth striving for; to be true to oneself is to try to live as well as one can – a way of life that yields greater and greater benefits for oneself and others. Integrity is about being true to oneself in this sense and the distinction between personal integrity and moral integrity has no application here.

The other major view of integrity that I will briefly discuss is the self-unification view. According to this view, integrity is a matter of being whole and unified. For instance, according to Cox, LaCaze and Levine, 2003 (p. 44, 43):

When self-unifying integrity is adequately explained, the reasons for pursuing it are anything but question begging. The pursuit of such integrity is not some abstract end in itself, but is essential to our agency and to our self-conception as an individual actively engaged with others and, in a sense, with ourselves over time. Identity, in the current context, is not static, there is nothing in the notion of self-unifying integrity which suggests that a person of integrity would keep all promises at all costs. Always keeping our promises, whether to others or ourselves, hardly seems wise. Deciding which promises to keep in life's changing circumstances is one of life's problems. What self-unifying integrity measures is our capacity to consider choices concerning our future undertakings and current self-understandings in full view of our past.

What self-unifying does is to unify past, present and future self.

The attempt to be a unified self is important, but it is not enough. To be worth striving for, our unified self must be something we are satisfied with and can live with. We have to live with ourselves; and for this purpose self-consistency is not enough. Integrity is best considered as that condition of living that we should always strive towards. Thus self-unification accounts of integrity miss a vital ingredient. Integrity also makes its possessor a role-model to others. Self-unification is not enough for this. Virtue which includes soundness of moral principle, uncorrupted character, truth telling, uprightness, honesty, sincerity, candor or uncompromising adherence to moral values is a clearly better definition of integrity.

### **ARISTOTLE ON VIRTUE:**

Integrity is closely tied to virtue; to live with integrity is to live virtuously. Having integrity doesn't mean that one never makes mistakes, including perhaps serious moral mistakes. But it does mean that one succeeds in approaching life virtuously. I will conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of what Aristotle considers to be a virtuous life.

Aristotle says “a person who becomes knowledgeable, must choose acts, however he must choose them for their own sake” (Cruzer, 2002, p. 1), and finally he states, “These actions must come from a firm and unchangeable sense of character” (Cruzer, 2002, p. 1).

Aristotle lists five parts of virtue.

- One very important one is the ability to label any acts that are virtuous in a situation.
- Secondly, we must get some idea of why they might be considered virtuous.
- Thirdly, are any of the virtuous acts we desire, acts just for their own sake?
- Fourth, a virtuous character will have a disposition to act virtuously, and
- Fifth, comes along a type of virtuous passion that Aristotle refers to.

Thereby, this virtuous person automatically acts and feels right naturally. In fact Aristotle calls it, ‘doing the right thing’ (Cruzer, 2002, p. 1). However, the real question is, as human beings, how is it that we start to desire virtuous acts for their own sake?

The transition takes place when we have arrived at what Aristotle calls a guided type of judgment or habitual thinking that is now just and noble. You now have the keen ability to act on your part. I would argue experience, tells one, trying your best to practice Aristotle’s as Cruzeiro calls it, “the right thing”, can bring about further noble acts because of the results it brings. That result is the inner happiness and contentment they bring. Many will argue, who is right and who is wrong in this life, but for the noble, just, and virtuous, it is a matter of what is right.

Some would draw the distinction that the virtuous acts towards other people do not always get the hoped for result or even response. This is true enough. Sometimes even a noble virtuous act can be quite painful; however, it is not worth the interruption of one’s peace of mind or serenity to change a lifestyle. One’s inner happiness and harmony is often worthwhile when it comes to the encouragement of others who may be in a mineshaft of shame, guilt and remorse with no way out.

One of the many self-destructive human emotions that seem to occupy more of humanity’s time than many others, is resentment. Along with its corrosive, harmful effects on the person carrying the resentment, they can spoil the relationships between people for a day or even years. Friendships of decades can be lost in an hour. Sometimes, integrity can be learning to hold one’s tongue in certain situations where otherwise it could possibly cause harm. However, if one



is to make a mistake, an apology must be made in the interest of the other person and to attempt to head off any resentment.

In the following quote Aristotle shows the difference in people who lead a virtuous life:

While arguments seem to have the power to encourage and stimulate the generous – minded among the young, and to make a character which is gently born, and a true lover of what is noble, ready to be possessed by virtue, they are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness. For these do not by nature obey the sense of *aidos* (shame, guilt, remorse), but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment.’ (As cited in Cruzer, 2003, p. 6).

According to Burnyeat, Aristotle had the viewpoint that, “the things you love in this sense are what you enjoy or take pleasure in. Moreover, Aristotle insists that people have the capacity for noble joy and noble hatred grows from habituation”. Aristotle’s main point is that habituation must always preclude “argument and teaching” (Cruzer, 2002, p. 3). Therefore the student must be “cultivated by means of habits before teaching can be effective. Argument and teaching are not powerful” (Cruzer, 2002, p. 3) with people unless proper habits are inculcated first. They must be there already. It may seem strange to us that in these two passages Aristotle is saying that the learner or student must come to be able to identify a virtuous act; as well as have a desire to perform it out of habit. Then and only then may he learn anything about nobility.

So it would seem that a stage of what Aristotle calls moral development is when we figure out all on our own, why it is necessary to perform a virtuous act for its own sake. This should, according to Aristotle, be considered the act that is an end in itself (not just a means). It becomes noble and just. This allows you to make a judgment all your own. Thus the beginnings of integrity are born. The reason is simple and that is because it is once again virtuous, not customary, but expected of oneself. Thus one could make the argument that virtue is a very important part of integrity and is the crux of my argument.

In the remaining chapters of this thesis, I will expand upon this conception of virtue and its relation both to integrity, selflessness and happiness.

## CHAPTER 2: SELFLESSNESS

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the idea of selflessness is introduced through a critical examination of utilitarianism. I argue that benevolence and humility as a way of life are the key ingredients of selflessness and they are vital to both happiness and integrity.

### UTILITARIANISM

The founders of Utilitarianism were Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who between them shaped both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of British thought in many areas of discourse, but most especially ethics, philosophy and even epistemology. Bentham himself was considered a political radical, although today he is better known for his moral views. The view that gets the most notice is his principle of Utilitarianism. This philosophy considers actions based on their consequences. The consequences that matter are, in fact, the overall happiness that is created for everyone affected by the action. His ethical theories were grounded in a type of empiricist view of human nature. This was influenced by thinkers of the enlightenment period like John Locke and David Hume. Bentham's theory was that what ultimately motivates human beings is either pleasure or pain. In Bentham's account, happiness can only be a matter of experiencing pleasure alongside lack of pain.

‘Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm’. (Bentham, 2007, Ch. 1)

One feature of utilitarianism of note is that integrity or ethical behavior can be understood free from religious or even traditional connections. One type of utilitarianism is called act-

utilitarianism, so named by R.B. Brandt. Act utilitarianism takes the view that the rightness or the wrongness of an action only depends on the consequences, meaning the effect of that action on the welfare of all human beings, or even sentient beings.

Most utilitarians realize that their ultimate appeal must come from a type of attitude they might have in common with other people. The direct type of sentiment to which they might appeal is a general feeling of benevolence. This is a type of attitude of seeking happiness or at least good consequences for all of humanity and, for some utilitarians, all sentient beings. Perhaps, the utilitarian's audience may not totally agree with all his positions; however, they are bound to be somewhat impressed by his expressions of goodwill.

Most people tend to favor an approach in which they obey a set of rules of some traditional moral system in which they were brought up. Still the utilitarian hopes he may persuade his audience to agree with his system of normative ethics. Because she is a utilitarian, she hopes to appeal to their sentiment of general benevolence. This is quite sure to be present in any group that is willing to discuss ethical questions. She may even try to convince some people that their previous attitudes about not being able to accept utilitarian ideas and concepts were only due to conceptual confusions. However, she will not be able to convince everybody.

Jack Smart observes that "It may well be that there is no ethical system which appeals to all people, or even to the same person in different moods" (1973, p. 7). Nonetheless, can ethics or ethical behavior be tied to integrity? Does this equate to happiness? Does this lead to selflessness? Is Happiness an inside job? These are just some of the questions we will attempt to answer. In this chapter, however, my aim is to examine the connection between selflessness and integrity. Utilitarianism represents one possible model of selflessness. Our first question is whether this model is satisfactory.

Let us set the contrast to two types of Utilitarianism; act utilitarianism, and rule utilitarianism. Act Utilitarianism takes the view that the rightness or wrongness of an action is to be determined by consequences, good or bad, of that action itself. On the other hand, rule utilitarians take the viewpoint that the rightness or wrongness of an action is to be determined by the goodness and badness of the consequences of a rule. In view of that rule everyone should perform the same action in like circumstances.

With the former, one gets a view like that of S.E. Toulmin and with the latter, one like Kant's. That is, if it is permissible to interpret Kant's principle 'Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law' as 'Act only on that maxim, which you as a humane and benevolent person would like to see established as a universal law' (Smart & Williams, 1973, p.9).

Of course Kant might have resisted this appeal to human feelings, but Smart calls this Kantian rule-utilitarianism in Kant's honour. The whole reason a rule-utilitarian tries to advocate his ideas and principles is because he is fervently concerned with human happiness. Some think it collapses under its own weight into a type of act utilitarianism. David Lyons gives the example, when he quotes an exception to a rule R, which produces the best possible outcome. After this happens, evidence reviewed, the rule R should be modified, thus allowing the exception. This gives us a new rule. Therefore, we now have a new set of rules to do R except it is in the case of C. That is, whatever might lead the act-utilitarian to break the rule would lead the Kantian rule-utilitarian to modify the rule. This would then make a rule-utilitarian equal to an act-utilitarian (Smart and Williams, 1965, p. 11).

Lyons' argument depends upon a particular interpretation of what counts as a rule. Rules according to the rule-utilitarian are things that an ordinary person could understand and apply. But Lyons' rules would involve so many exceptions that no person could abide by them.

Of course, both sorts of utilitarian talk about the rightness and wrongness of our actions. What kind of effect may they have on how real people understand their ethics? The question remains are the rightness and wrongness of actions enough? As human beings we need to aim as far as possible to overcome those defects of character that stand in the way of humanity's flourishing. Although one will never reach perfection in this life, this cannot be an excuse for not trying to become the very best example of a human being. Utilitarian principles may help, but since they are devoted to acts alone, or the rules that govern them, they cannot fully do justice to our ethical thoughts.

One must always remember that many people have only seen and heard less than ideal perplexities of humanity. Perhaps, the human happiness they see in a person can help them out

of a pit of despair. Of the many people one comes in contact with daily, one never knows where that person is at in their life's journey or how one's help might affect them now or later. So, if one has trouble making a decision in light of what we have learned of the utilitarian position, then we have missed the mark when appealing to normative ethics. The best one can do to make other's lives better is to live according to your own ideal of doing the next right thing; one's own happiness and ethical success can be an example to others. We do not control or fully understand the consequences of our actions and it is a mistake to think that we ought to.

Most people have feelings of benevolence and sound moral thinking along with reason. If a man is irrational about morals he must also be irrational about probabilities for the future. This may cloud his decision making abilities which will abruptly affect his happiness and that of others around him. The greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people is, roughly, the goal of utilitarianism. This is all to the good. However, if every person worked every minute of every day to maximize happiness, they would have no life of their own. If in thought, word and deed a person tries to the very best of their ability in a selfless way to put other people first, and themselves last in moderation, they will be accomplishing the paradoxical idea underlying utilitarianism. But the idea of combining moderation with selflessness needs careful explication. In "Utilitarian Morality and the Personal Point of View", David Brink argues that utilitarian theory can accommodate the idea that the best outcomes are to be obtained by allowing people to give their own projects in live a special priority. However, this raises the question of how to bring together an ideal of selflessness with a version of utilitarianism that returns emphasis to actions that prioritize our own projects. I will describe an account of selflessness that does this in the next section.

Utilitarianism is a very important philosophical position. However, I propose a modified version. By adding selflessness to the formula, we are not just looking for what is in it for us, but what we may do for others. This will propel the version I propose, forward. There are those who will rely on the demandingness objection. Some moral theories are considered to be too demanding to follow. The demandingness objection relies on the idea that a moral theory has principles within its standard that for all intents and purposes are too demanding. Utilitarianism is often claimed to be such a theory. (See Scheffler 1994, chapter 3.)

Let us take the case of a society in which we do not find any type of extreme situations. In that society some people may adopt a utilitarian or close to utilitarian thought process, but

many cannot. One could consider it might be better to provide our support behind the prevailing morality, instead of seeking to change it with the risk of the weakening respect for human aspiration. As Sidgwick said:

The doctrine that Universal Happiness as the ultimate *standard* must not be understood to imply that Universal Benevolence is...always the best *motive* of action. For...it is not necessary that the end which gives the criterion of rightness should always be the end at which we consciously aim: and if experience shows that the general happiness will be more satisfactorily attained if men frequently act from other motives than pure universal philanthropy, it is obvious that these other motives are to be preferred on Utilitarian principles (quoted in Smart & Williams, 1973, p. 51).

Smart says that it is dangerous to influence a person in opposition to whatever his convictions of what is right may be. The possibility exists that more harm may be done in altering his regard for duty, than would be saved by preventing the particular action. (Smart and Williams, 1973, p. 51) Quoting Sidgwick again, “any particular existing moral rule, though not ideally best even for such beings as existing men under the existing circumstances, may yet be the best that they can be got to obey” (Sidgwick, as cited in Smart & Williams, 1973, p. 51,52).

Therefore, it might be useful to advance a moderate form of selflessness, even and although this is not a pure form of benevolence. Moderate selflessness means putting others in one’s life ahead of oneself. Paradoxically, this is not a self-sacrificial attitude. The utilitarian concept of selflessness puts everyone on an equal footing. Nobody is more important than anyone else. This is both too demanding a standard and too inhuman. This treatment of oneself as neither no more nor less important than anyone is a wonderful idea in theory. But it is not a good way of living an ethical life. Ethical theories have to meet the test of everyday life. Is this something that one can live by and live with?

Jack Smart takes a different point viewpoint. He discusses Kurt Baier’s view that act-utilitarianism must be rejected because it says we should never relax, we should use all our time for good works. Smart argues that the utilitarian has but two replies. One is that what most

people surmise as ordinary is false. Second, a rational type of investigation might lead us to conclude that we could just relax less than we do. The third possibility or reply is that act-utilitarian ideas do not provide any premises that show we should never relax. Perhaps relaxing and doing a few good works each day increases threefold our capacity to do good works tomorrow. (Smart & Williams, 1973, p. 55)

I think Smart overstates the possibility that act-utilitarianism is compatible with a life lived well. What is important here is that we live lives that are good for others, both as examples and fellow citizens; that we become important parts of others' lives and that we become a benevolent force in their lives. Treating all our actions as just opportunities to maximize utility misses this.

I argue for a moderate sense of utilitarianism that falls under a type of middle ground. With this in mind, one might be able to achieve the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people, always with an eye toward integrity and selflessness. This may influence the most amount of people's lives and help them be richly filled with both purpose and meaning. At the same time because of the selflessness factor they will not want to hold this treasure to themselves.

Williams makes the claim that utilitarianism's demands are just too impartial therefore no personal integrity can be had by the utilitarian. He makes his case against utilitarianism into a dilemma for any clear-cut utilitarian. He uses the example of a man named Jim who happens upon a small South American village. Suddenly, he spots twenty or so Indians lined up against a wall about to be shot. A heavy captain in a khaki shirt is in charge. After questioning Jim, he says he is willing to declare Jim an honoured visitor from another land. Then and only then, after Jim kills one Indian will the others be let off, the making of a special occasion. Of course, if Jim refuses, then there is no special occasion, and all the Indians will be killed. (Smart and Williams, 1973, p. 98)

One of the special features of Utilitarianism is that it does not take into consideration when some cases should take feelings into account; for example, the fact that each one of us is especially responsible for what he or she does instead of what other people do. This cardinal principle and idea is very closely related to integrity as well as selflessness. We care for other people; we must do this to follow the intent of our principles.

## **SELFLESSNESS**

There are three different descriptions of selflessness in respect to utilitarianism and one's own happiness that I want to consider.

- Description A: Every act is right and proper only if one considers other people's happiness as important as one's own.
- Description B: Selflessness is to treat one's own happiness as less important than the happiness of other people in one's life.
- Description C: Selflessness is to treat your own happiness as not important at all.

And so out of these three descriptions of selflessness I need to find the proper description that fits my philosophical purpose. The most obvious answer comes under description B, because this description takes oneself out of the picture, relieves one of the bondage of self-centered thinking and behavior. This type of thinking philosophically takes oneself into another dimension of existence, whereby what one has or has not is not so important. However, it is what one gives away in this manner of selfless giving that encourages integrity both in the giver and the receiver. It encourages the integrity of the receiver because it inspires them to live with selflessness also.

Description A is the utilitarian perspective. This flattens our moral world. It treats everyone the same, in principle. No person is made to feel special. As I argued in the previous section, this is not a satisfactory way of thinking about our moral relationships with others. Description C, on the other hand, encourages dishonesty. To think this way requires us to deny our own basic wishes and to treat our own happiness as not important at all.

What does my concept of selflessness mean, as specified in description B above? It means regarding your life as a gift to others. That gift is given to the receiver without any thought of return. This by its very nature becomes the art of selfless giving. And when selflessness and giving are seen in this light, all sorts of things are apt to happen. Newfound projects may emerge; our thought processes may be kindled anew. All sorts of projects that can be nothing but beneficial to humanity's imagination will be sparked. This is not to say that the other two types of selflessness do not have a place and perhaps even a time in our world, one must not entirely discount them. However, description B describes the idea of selflessness that



allows integrity, selflessness and happiness to steer the good life in a way that can be seen and heard by others.

What is the relationship between integrity and selflessness when it comes to artists? An artist who is committed to realizing their own personal vision of artistic excellence seems like someone who lacks selflessness and yet possesses integrity. I argue that an artist ought to create art for the good of others primarily, for their enjoyment as well as hers. Therefore, an artist can have selflessness and a passionate commitment to artistic excellence. Selflessness isn't a matter of always prying into the affairs of others and trying to be helpful to them. It is a matter of valuing your projects primarily because they are valuable to others.

## **HAPPINESS**

And so what of happiness? Is it just a byproduct of the right kind of living as I have suggested? The right kind of living is a triangular way of life. This triangle consists of a selfless way of life and integrity. These are two aspects of a virtuous life that leads to something called inner happiness, a happiness the things of this world can neither give nor take away. This happiness is an inner peace, a feeling that all is right with oneself and one's humanity. My view of the relationship between happiness and living a morally good life contrasts with Kant's. Kant writes in *The Critique of Practical Reason*: "But this distinction of the principle of happiness from that of morality is not for this reason an opposition between them, and pure practical reason does not require that we should renounce the claims to happiness; it requires that we take no account of them whenever duty is in question" (Arrington, p. 289).

Kant's view is that when there is a choice between duty and happiness the moral obligation for mankind is always duty. This duty is to do the right thing in all circumstances. When one does this often happiness will result, but not always. In any case, we would pursue it certainly as rational persons. "To be happy is necessarily the desire of every rational but finite being" (Arrington, p. 289-90).

According to Kant, we must believe in or postulate in God and immortality in order to have faith in morality, or to do the next right thing. Duty first, happiness second; but God and immortality ensure that duty and happiness will eventually reconcile. Arrington describes Kant's position in the following way.

‘In his critique of Practical Reason, Kant gives us a theory of the Summum bonum, the highest or most perfect good. The highest good consists of two parts: Morality or virtue is the first, happiness is the second. Virtue is the required condition for anything being good or desirable, but this does not prove that virtue is the “entire and perfect good” – rather, “for this, happiness is also required” (Critique of Practical Reason, 116,110). Accordingly, Kant describes the highest good as happiness in proportion to worth, or happiness in accord with virtue. The most perfect, complete state of affairs that could exist in the world of finite beings would be one in which human beings are happy to the degree that they deserve to be. Conversely, a world which one was worthy of happiness but did not attain it, would not be a rational world. As Kant puts it in the lecture on ethics, “The highest created good is the most perfect world, that is, a world in which all rational beings are happy and are worthy of happiness (Lectures on Ethics, 6)” (Arrington, p. 290)

I think that Kant is right about the highest good, but wrong about the need for this postulate of God and immortality. Living a good life is our best way of achieving happiness right here and now. We should not rely upon God alone to ensure our happiness when we can secure it on our own. We are responsible for our own happiness, as we are responsible for our own virtue.

The ideals of selflessness and integrity are a timeless starting point for this task. There is a big difference between contentment and pure happiness, especially from the inside of a person’s being. To be contented is merely to be without complaint and dissatisfaction. To be happy is to be joyful. This joy does not come out of merely doing one’s duty, but through selflessness.

Are there counterexamples to the relationship between selflessness and happiness? For example, overly burdened and sometimes exhausted family caregivers, along with those (often women) who seriously neglect their own welfare in devoting themselves fully to their partner’s best interest? This could easily be the case for any caregiver who not only works but also devotes

herself to a modern household. A modern home with children and a demanding husband could tax anyone. Although these caregivers are sometimes exhausted, they would tell you that they would not trade their happiness back for the most exhausting moments. And we could say the same thing about people who work in refugee camps, food banks or soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Selflessness, as I understand, is not the abandonment and neglect of the self. It is a matter of prioritizing others in one's life. What is most of value to a selfless person is the good that they do for others; and this is generally reflected back to them. To succeed in living with both integrity and selflessness requires one to take care of oneself as well as others. If you take care of yourself, you can best take care of others. If a person is depressed or miserable, because of their attempts to help others, they are not succeeding in being truly selfless.

Consider an everyday, concrete example of the relationship between selflessness and happiness. One such example might be a golf caddy who selflessly goes all over the golf course to carry clubs for others. He has a love for the game. He keeps score. He has learned many things about the game. He may never even play the game but yet he shows up time and time again, all season. He has no membership, gets paid very little. He loves the natural beauty and surroundings of the course, and it is near to where he lives. He knows his job requires humility but he doesn't mind. He doesn't even know what his final purpose may be yet he continues day after day. He believes one day his purpose will be revealed. In the meantime he has that enduring joy and peace because it is not about him, his little plans and desires. Happiness has found him.

Another counterexample would be a person who has suffered the loss of a loved one. Wouldn't the attendant grief rule out the serenity and peace of happiness no matter how selflessly the person lives? My view is that integrity and selflessness added together give us our best chance at a life of happiness. It doesn't follow from this that we cannot feel grief and misery at the loss of a loved one. Becoming selfish in the face of grief will not make us happier in the face of grief. Losing one's principles would perhaps become another source of grief.

The relationship between my own pursuit of happiness and my faith in a benevolent creator should be based on humility rather than need. I should be humble in the face of the world, not demanding of it. One may believe that whatever the future holds it must hold more good than evil. Surely, a benevolent creator of any sort would wish it so. But this thought ought not to be

the basis of any relationship a person has to faith in God. We ought not to believe in God, if we do, simply because God guarantees us the highest good.

If we as humans are to leave the fragility of life as we have been living it, each day must be a day to carry a vision that enables us to take our next steps towards integrity and selflessness. Once self-centeredness has been turned out of our lives, we will feel as if we have been propelled into a new way of experiencing our life. Our principles and cornerstones now in place, I feel we need not apologize for either integrity or selflessness; two ideals worth working towards. Therefore, by staying in the solution of active integrity and selflessness, which in turn creates happiness and daily gratitude for blessings received, as well as a better life, we have arrived at a formula for better living.

## CHAPTER 3: MACINTYRE ON FLOURISHING

### INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I argued that the highest forms of human happiness require selflessness, understood as a disposition to put others in our lives first. In the chapter, I turn to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre in order to defend this claim. In his book *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), MacIntyre develops an account of human flourishing that acknowledges the inevitability of our dependence on each other. This is the basis for my claim that genuine human happiness can only be achieved through living a virtuous and selfless life. Integrity is the key virtue, but other virtues are important too.

Throughout his book, MacIntyre again and again shows how we, as humans, cannot afford the luxury of the lone wolf syndrome as exemplified by the life and thought of Frederick Nietzsche. We are social animals, but also rational; we require benevolence in order to flourish. MacIntyre begins with the concept of flourishing. He notes that flourishing is a species-dependent quality. It exists “*qua* humans, *qua* monkeys, *qua* animals, *qua* dolphins, or even *qua* plants” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 64). When he talks of human flourishing, MacIntyre means to flourish in virtue or goodness.

What in itself is good? When we make judgments about others or even other communities and what is best for all of these, according to MacIntyre, we must look at human flourishing. An example could be Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel. Millions of people have seen it and have gained inspiration from his frescoes. The frescoes are a good in themselves, because they are an inspirational achievement in the arts. In a similar way, human flourishing is a good in itself. (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 67) says:

We therefore need to distinguish between what it is that makes certain goods good and goods to be valued for their own sake from what it is that makes it good for this particular individual or this particular society in this particular situation to make them objects of her or his or their effective practical regard. And our judgments

about how it is best for an individual or a community to order the goods in their lives exemplify this third type of ascription, one whereby we judge unconditionally about what it is best for individuals or groups to be or do or have not only qua agents engaged in this or that form of activity in this or that role or roles, but also *qua* human beings. It is these judgments that are judgments about human flourishing.

Although reason, culture, and situation may all vary, the results required are all the same in the end: human flourishing. MacIntyre drives home this point about human flourishing and what causes and affects it. He seeks to establish that it is the virtues that affect not only others and their lives but even us and our daily lives. If he is right, and quite possibly he is, could this flourishing be the key to human happiness? After all, what exactly is flourishing? What did Aristotle or Saint Thomas Aquinas mean? Is MacIntyre giving us his update of Aristotle's key to the virtues? MacIntyre claims that humans need to understand themselves in order to flourish. Without this conceptual understanding, no flourishing can be had. Socially flourishing relationships are critical to well-being. These help human reasoning and require human reasoning.

Here are two examples of non-flourishing parts of society on the flip side of MacIntyre's account of a flourishing human being. MacIntyre proposes that we need the virtues to form a communal sense of values both in us and in society. When those truths become half-realized and societal norms begin to break down, what happens? A vacuum forms. After this occurs, usually some power-driver fills the void, someone who also claims the authority of a higher order. This power driver, the person on the flipside of MacIntyre's argument, who may or may not think they get directions straight from a higher order, bowls everything over in their path to meet the end goal. One could almost say they are like a hurricane roaring its way through the lives of others, the things in their way must be eliminated or else exploited.

Another non-flourishing example could be that of a lead actor in a stage play. What might happen, when the lead actor takes control of the stage play? This same lead actor tries to arrange everything just perfectly to his satisfaction and in the way he sees fit. In the end, the stage play probably does not come off very well. All the other actors' revolt, and chaos is the result. Our

lead actor, looking back, is sure if he could have just manipulated one more person, place or thing on that stage, the show would have come off perfectly. Everyone would have been happy and, best of all, he would have been the toast of the town. After all, our lead actor thinks of himself as perfection, leading all others down the golden path, the true answer to happiness in life. To his consternation, our lead actor instead finds himself marooned by the very people he just knew would support him as he led them, as he directed them by arranging the lights, props, costumes, scenery, just to let them know how good a lead actor he was. Why, he might even become a director one day and open a theatre company, in which they might show their gratitude, or should one say, servitude. Our lead actor has shown us an example of self-centered ego in the extreme, thinking of himself first, second and always before others.

MacIntyre points out in *Dependent Rational Animals* that even in a colony of dolphins, the relationships they have to each other is quite indispensable to their flourishing. Could we not say the same thing is true of humankind? No person is an island. We not only need the virtues to get along as one common community, but also as a world order, a culture, and as individual communities. We must decide and teach our children what kind of world we want to live in and leave to future generations.

This is what makes MacIntyre's argument profound. He leaves no one in society out of his equation. He takes into account the old, the very young, the ill, the injured and the disabled. In his determination, virtue and common good must always be the rule. We know, for example, because MacIntyre points it out, or at least re-emphasizes it, that people and dolphins are similar in many ways. Toxic things will hurt our existence. When human reasoning is endangered, so is our relationship with dolphins and other mammals. Most people develop their general ideals and values from an early age. MacIntyre, in his writings, says this is an inescapable conclusion. He further concedes, as humans, we must understand ourselves, for barring this achievement, a human being will not flourish. This is the principal way humans are different from other mammals such as dolphins.

MacIntyre points out the signposts that make a good community. For example, he notes what makes good child rearing. To let a child know early in development what is good or bad for them is vital. What is the crucial step? He calls it becoming an independent practical reasoner. We need this step to make correct judgments about life, living, happiness and, of course, the very

heart of the matter, the flourishing of our species. In this manner we develop our capacity to make the leap from our earliest development and from those who taught us, such as teachers. Eventually, we too could make reasonable judgments about life and living and the community we live in, without fear or favor, always with a sense of humility for gifts received. Having these rudiments of virtue, according to MacIntyre's philosophy, we now have good reasons to act in particular ways, rather than in others. We have become Independent Practical Reasoners. Although one may have experienced this way of life before reading MacIntyre's book, it reinforces and cements the foundation for living life this way.

A child learns to make his own way, because of the people, teachers and others that help make judgments for him about early life. This is as it should be. However, when it comes to one's very own ideals about "the good that I am", what each of us has to do, in order to develop our powers as independent reasoners, and so to flourish *qua* members of our species, is to make the transition from accepting what we are taught by those earliest teachers to making our own independent judgments about goods, judgments, that we are able to justify rationally to ourselves and to others as furnishing us with good reasons for acting in this way rather than that (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 71).

MacIntyre claims that the transition to becoming an independent practical reasoner involves the three dimensions, described below. This allows for a logical argument. These three dimensions can stand together or on their own. The first language is what makes the discovery possible, along with some other capabilities. MacIntyre describes the second dimension in these terms:

"The first salient aspect of this transition, as I noted earlier, is that it is a movement from merely having reasons to being able to evaluate our reasons as good or as bad reasons and by so doing to



change our reasons for acting; in consequence our actions”  
(MacIntyre, 1999, p. 72).

MacIntyre earlier noted that a very early aspect of the transition is the movement from having only reasons for acting, to being actually able to stand back and analyze our reasons as either good or bad, and by so, doing change our reasons in the future for acting in consequence of those actions. This is the second dimension.

The second dimension involves cultivating a distance from our desires. MacIntyre (1999) makes the claim, “to have learned how to stand back in some measure from our present desires, so as to be able to evaluate them, is a necessary condition for engaging in sound reasoning about our reasons for action” (p. 72).

MacIntyre offers a critical analysis of just how important it is for us in society to make this transition. It comes from a vision he transmits of those in society that live in the shadows. He makes the claim that for us, as for them, it is of crucial importance that we confront the same obstacles they do. MacIntyre says,

We need others to help us avoid encountering and falling victim to disabling conditions, but when, often inescapably, we do fall victim, either temporarily or permanently, to such conditions as those of blindness, deafness, crippling injury, debilitating disease, or psychological disorder, we need others to sustain us, to help us in obtaining needed, often scarce, resources, to help us discover what new ways forward there may be, and to stand in our place from time to time doing on our behalf what we cannot do for ourselves.(p. 73)

Many of these people have played a valuable role in our very own transition. One might ask the question, transition to what? The answer would be from childlike dependency to being engaged socially and finally being defined by the relationships one has built throughout one’s life. At some point, one becomes this rationally independent practical reasoner. This, however, is not an end in itself, because learning to cooperate with others and to persevere in human good makes those same relationships and societies flourish at any level. Understanding their good is

necessary to the understanding of the present time as well as the future. This movement that takes us from an awareness of only the present to some awareness of an imagined future, is the third dimension.

Of his account of the transition from childhood to becoming an independent practical reasoner, MacIntyre (p. 74) says, “This too, like the ability to evaluate our reasons for action and the ability to distance ourselves from our present desires, is an ability that requires both possession of language and the capacity to put language to a wide range of different uses”.

Non-human animals by contrast lack the capacity for language and imagining possible futures. Wittgenstein takes it even further: “One can imagine an animal (tiger) angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, and startled. But hopeful? And why not?” And he goes on to point out that a dog may believe that its master is at the door but not that he will come the day after tomorrow. (Philosophical Investigations II, I, 174)

Children do not develop into adults by themselves. Their development into independent practical reasoners requires social cooperation. To be an independent practical reasoner requires being part of a cooperative social community, one that can deliberate about an imagined future. MacIntyre states (p. 74),

Independent practical reasoners contribute to the formation and sustaining of their social relationships, as infants do not, and to learn how to become an independent practical reasoner is to learn how to cooperate with others in forming and sustaining those same relationships that make possible the achievement of common goods by independent practical reasoners. Such cooperative activities presuppose some degree of shared understanding of present and future possibilities”.

One must remember that along with positive present and future possibilities, there is another side of life worthy of one’s imagination. Many around us, some near, perhaps others far away, suffer from assorted ranges of horrendous handicaps and illnesses. These can run the gamut from the deformed infant, the blind, the deaf, and the loss of limbs to many other forms of disability. Many of these people see a narrow view of the world ahead for themselves. This has

often been treated as a matter of fact in society. However, there is a way for these obstacles to be overcome. It has a threefold answer. Firstly the disabled or impoverished must help themselves as a first part of the answer. Secondly, others must contribute to the wellbeing of these groups. Usually one gets tenfold back what one gives away. Thirdly, another reason, according to MacIntyre, is “Others too may become the victims of an inability to imagine alternative realistic futures, because in some crucial stages of early life they were not provided with enough of an education in imagining alternative possibilities” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 75). So the third part of the answer is education about the possibilities of life.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GOOD LIFE**

What happens if a person’s early childhood experiences are stifled? Perhaps the home life is a battlefield; then what? These defective relations can and do often follow children right into adulthood. The child’s, and later adolescents, creative, mental, and physical sense of self, as well as any kind of independence in the faculty of reasoning, can be challenged.

MacIntyre discusses Bernard Williams’ account of internal reasons to illuminate the difficulty of moving from childhood to adulthood.

Williams has argued that there can be no such thing as a reason for action by a particular agent which is external to and independent of the members of this agent’s motivational set, but he is careful to point out that we should not think that set as “statically given” (Williams, 1981, p. 105). So Williams certainly allows that an agent may come to be moved by considerations which do not at present move her or him; what had been an external reason may become an internal reason. But what Williams’s conclusion does exclude is the possibility that it may be true of some particular agent that it would be good and best for her or him, *qua* human being or *qua* aunt or *qua* farmer to do such and such, and therefore she or he has good reason to do such and such, independently of whether or not any at present or future time that agent will have,

perhaps even could have, given her or his individual circumstances, the requisite motivation (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 86).

MacIntyre continues his discussion:

William's account certainly allows for moral development of some kinds, but it obscures from view the way in which agents have to learn at various stages how to transcend what have been up till this or that point the limitations of their motivational set and will fail badly in their moral development, if they remain within those limitations (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 87).

Exactly how does this change, this transformation of a child's motivational set, occur? Sometimes, under the correct type of circumstances like the ones MacIntyre describes, it seems to happen naturally, like the ebb and flow of the sea. However, in other cases nothing but the most stringent work on a human being unaware of the virtues, or just plain belligerent towards any such terms, can bring about the much desired result. Some people really do exalt in their defects of character, especially those glorified in movies and on television.

Can it be by accident that MacIntyre uses the word moral, twice, within a very short space? Perhaps one should then start to take a look at what qualities are best for a child to develop in the first place. What changes, new directions and eventually inclinations may propel a child towards getting through the seasons of life? Nothing in human life exists in a vacuum. If nothing changes, nothing changes. Much help is needed to survive the rigors of everyday life.

When we think about people who have become temperate, how is it that they have come to enjoy moderation? Were they born into moderation as a child or was there a degree of self-centeredness? Indeed, is there a degree of self-centeredness in all of us? So are the virtues MacIntyre continues to speak of necessarily learned traits. What about people in society who live in the excesses of gluttony, sloth, pride, greed, lust, anger and envy: the seven deadly sins? These traits can asphyxiate any degree of agreeable attitude one may try to carry out into the world. It is only when the virtues are applied to these self-indulgent character defects, that one can live a worthwhile life as an independent practical reasoner. One is reminded that such individuals are

fortunate. Some never recover from the tormented lives they lead. However, some people do make remarkable progress if they are willing to take a chance on changing.

For those who somehow make it through the early educational help with the virtues MacIntyre refers to, the picture is completely different.

Someone who has become temperate will have come to enjoy moderation and to find excess disagreeable and even painful. She or he will no longer practice moderation in spite of a desire for the pleasures that belong to excess, but because desire itself has been transformed. What she or he finds agreeable and useful is no longer the same, and temperateness itself will now have become agreeable and will not be recognized as useful. The class of virtues, that is to say, includes some virtues at least, such as temperateness, that are agreeable to and are recognized as useful by those who possess them, but that may well seem disagreeable and even harmful not only to those with the corresponding vices, but also to those whose purposes are such that it is useful to them that others should have those vices. So it is highly agreeable and useful to those who market certain kinds of consumer goods that there should be intemperate consumers. Their own vice of acquisitiveness make the vice of intemperateness in others agreeable and useful to them (p. 88).

To acquire a virtue is often to change the sorts of things one desires and this change will not necessarily be welcomed by others or even by one's past self.

Why is it that MacIntyre continues to make the assertion in his dissertation of how important education and the role of parents, community and others are? He keeps subdividing the roles and what part they play. For example, he cites that especially mothers provide first a secure home and constant approval. It must be the correct kind of approval and not abuse. Then the other part of the division of parenting is unconditional love. This just means that, no matter what happens in your life, your parent will be there for you. Lastly, the parents, but especially mothers, will make the child's needs predominant in their life, ahead of her own needs.

Even before a child is born, parents may say all they really want is a healthy child. What they really mean most of the time is that they are hoping their child doesn't get struck down with some crippling disease, doesn't end up with mental difficulties, sickly development, or any number of childhood illnesses that could strike. However, the commitment to children holds whether extremely healthy or brain damaged. As MacIntyre says:

The parents of children who are in fact severely disabled, do of course, sometimes need to be heroic in their exercise of the relevant virtues, as the parents of ordinary children do not. They have one of the most demanding kinds of work that there is. But it is the parents of the severely disabled who are the paradigm of good motherhood and fatherhood as such, who provide the model for the key to the work of all parents (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 91).

I think that MacIntyre is arguing for the importance of selflessness. The integrity of parents resides in the selflessness they show to their children in any matter. The ideal of a good parent is one that puts children first. Parents of disabled children show the extreme example of this virtue.

## **FLOURISHING, SELF-KNOWLEDGE, AND INTEGRITY**

At some point, children, adolescents, even adults learn some sort of usage of the word 'good' and its alternatives. If they fail to learn a satisfactory use of the concept 'good', they may fail to learn what is genuinely valuable for them. Even this may have a positive educative value for them unless failure is deeply and irreversibly vicious. Having a general knowledge of the virtues early in life and now having failed to achieve something valued, one has the opportunity to reflect on one's history and reconsider what is good in one's life.

For the greater part of our knowledge of the natural and social world we of course have to rely upon what others – the majority of them others of whom we have no first-hand knowledge - communicated to us, in order to supplement the meagerness of our individual experience. But our self-knowledge too depends in key part upon what we learn about ourselves from others, and more

than this, upon a confirmation of our own judgments and ourselves by others who know us well, a confirmation that only such others can provide. (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 94)

I cannot truly know myself alone. This mirror effect of human identity is emphasized by numerous philosophers including Wittgenstein. In fact, the only reason I truly know what and who I might be is because there are other people who know who and what I am as a human being.

In fact, in almost all human affairs, self-knowledge alone will not fix one's problems. However, when the virtues are applied, it is a different matter altogether. There is one virtue that is irreplaceable when it comes to finding a degree of resisting self-deception. It is, quite simply, lucid appreciation of the truth about oneself.

Honesty to both oneself and others requires constant self-examination and being accountable for one's actions. We need this part of the formula, in other words integrity, to become independent practical reasoners.

Let it be noted, however, that we always will continue to need others for the rest of our lives. After all, look at a family of dolphins or even gorillas. Neither species lives alone, but in groups. If we look at a flock of sheep wandering along a hillside, they seem to get along fine. It is only when one strays away from the flock that the wolves close in. Why is it so important for our moral lives that we live well together in groups? MacIntyre sees this in terms of our ability to avoid serious errors.

We may at any point go astray in our practical reasoning because of intellectual error: perhaps we happen to be insufficiently well-informed about the particulars of our situation; or we have gone beyond the evidence in a way that has misled us; or we have relied too heavily on some unsubstantiated generalization. But we may also go astray because of moral error: we have been over-influenced by our dislike of someone; we have projected on to a situation some phantasy in whose grip we are; we are insufficiently sensitive to someone else's suffering. And our intellectual errors

are often, although not always, rooted in our moral errors. From both types of mistake the best protections are friendship and collegiality (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 97).

As we become better independent practical reasoners, we develop our character one step at a time for the better, using the virtues as our guide and thus becoming better able to judge the character in others. MacIntyre (1999) claims that, “When we are unable to rely on coworkers and friends, then our confidence in our own judgments may always become a source of illusion” (p. 97).

Why would it be that any source of illusion, when it comes to our judgments about life and living, ever enters our life? A house is only as strong as its foundation. Just as a house needs a strong foundation to withstand the storms that may test its strength, so people need a secure foundation for their confidence in their own judgments. Most children imitate from a very early age nearly every action and reaction their parent’s model for them. So it goes, if one grows up with a faulty foundation, there is only one solution. That foundation must be torn asunder and rebuilt upon firm bedrock. This can and is done, even in the most severe cases. So what is the key? Many of the solutions are described in MacIntyre’s book, but they probably could have been found in a lot of philosophy books. For example, MacIntyre says respect for truth is a central part of his list of virtues. Let us add one: the idea of keeping an open mind. Many people close their minds when it comes to new ideas, even if life is crumbling in around them. They would much prefer going back to familiar territory or a date with the undertaker. A closed mind is one of many ways in which humans are dangerous to each other.

MacIntyre (1999, p. 97) remarks:

There is no point in our development towards and in our exercise of independent practical reasoning at which we cease altogether to be dependent on particular others. But of course it may always happen that those on whom we depend may lack the virtues necessary for developing or sustaining our practical reasoning and so by neglect, by well-intended, but harmful misdirection, by manipulation or exploitation or victimization, may fail to prevent otherwise avoidable disability, even on occasion intentionally, and



so of defective development. (I am not losing sight of the fact that much disability is unavoidable.) Dolphins do not have reason to fear dolphins, as humans have reason to fear humans.

To get to a place where the kind of ordered social relationships that MacIntyre refers to comes into one's life fully, one will need adequate practical reasoning and development of a range of virtues. Usually we have been given much of what we need in life. We have been given this gift of becoming independent practical reasoners and we now find ourselves in the position of giving back to others what, at one time, we so desperately needed ourselves.

Most people are capable of being highly self-centered. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes even coined a few words to describe what life would be like in a world where individual egos reigned supreme; the self would run riot. Hobbes said that in a state of nature, a state in which human behavior is not controlled by governing forces, human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (The Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes, 1660, Ch. XIII, XIV). However, it is the networks of relationships one finds oneself in that makes the change from a dangerous state of nature to a human community.

MacIntyre's view on Page 108,109 is:

When a network of such familial, neighborhood, and craft relationship is in a flourishing state, when, that is, there is a flourishing local community, it will always be because those activities of the members of that community that aim at their common good are informed by their practical rationality. But those who benefit from that communal flourishing will include those least capable of independent practical reasoning, the very young and the very old, the sick, the injured, and the otherwise disabled, and their individual flourishing will be an important index of the flourishing of the whole community. For it is insofar as it is *need* that provides reasons for action for the members of some particular community that that community flourishes.

It is here where MacIntyre takes his stand about the fact that a flourishing community, a community that evades Hobbes' nightmare, must be one in which the most needful are cared for. Since every person is needful and dependent at particular points in their life, perhaps at many points, this completes the circle of caring.

There is another circle that characterizes a flourishing community. It is the circle of accountability. A person must be accountable to others at the same time that others are accountable to them. And a person must always be accountable to themselves. A community of independent practical reasoners will be one in which people in general accept the burden of accountability, both to themselves and to others. MacIntyre puts the point this way on page 105:

By independence I mean both the ability and willingness to evaluate the reasons for action advanced to one by others, so that one makes oneself accountable for one's endorsements of the practical conclusions of others as well as for one's own conclusions. One cannot then be an independent practical reasoner without being able to give to others an intelligible account of one's reasoning.

MacIntyre says with good reason that this account need not be theoretical in any substantial sense. He uses a very simple age old formula that takes into account how humans gain independence of spirit. He cites willingness as a key ingredient for a person of action. He then furthers all of these conclusions by showing how this formula makes us accountable to others and ourselves. The business of being accountable to others is not just a theory one can articulate or espouse, it is something one must live. In order to become this independent practical reasoner, we will need all parts of the formula: enthusiasm, tolerance, and of course, honesty.

Let me summarize my use of MacIntyre in this thesis. I argue that study of dependent rational animals ties in well with my overall argument. He details how children, through practices of child rearing by their parents and community can learn starting at an early age to reason and later in time to become an independent practical reasoner. He describes throughout his book how the family unit and the community are essential to the formation of independent practical reasoners. This process is meant to work in several ways according to MacIntyre's formulation. He talks of the importance of parental love and how it is an unconditional love,

never abuse of any kind. Parents almost by necessity put the child's needs above and ahead of their own. In any case they will go to great lengths to guard, defend and love this child and selflessly help them become adults.

However MacIntyre takes care never to leave anyone out of his considerations. He speaks of children who are extremely disabled, their parents sometimes need to go to much further lengths in the exercise of the relevant virtues. These would perhaps be heroic in nature. I am thus in agreement with many, if not all of the arguments of his book. Let us look at a number of them. Consider selflessness. MacIntyre demonstrates through his examples of the parents and the communal examples of disabled children, the very old, the sick, the injured, the otherwise greatly disenfranchised and even the very young, his index of flourishing. Through MacIntyre's examples of flourishing one can see how he sees the development of character as paramount using the virtues and selflessness as one's guide.

Every person at some point in their lives become needful and dependent, and at that time they will therefore they will open the possibility of completing the circle of caring. This further completes the community's circle of caring, in which one generation cares of another, to be cared for by that other in turn. There is also what MacIntyre refers to as a circle of accountability: the ways in which we must simply be accountable to others and ourselves. As MacIntyre constantly alludes to, we must live in at least a minimally virtuous community in order to achieve the extraordinary cognitive accomplishment of becoming an independent practical reasoner. MacIntyre provides me, in this thesis, with an account of the relationship between flourishing and the virtues of acknowledged dependence. And I turn to this issue now.

## **ARISTOTELEAN VIRTUES AND THE VIRTUES OF ACKNOWLEDGED DEPENDENCE**

To thrive within a community, we need to develop certain virtues. Aristotelian virtues are some of the needed virtues, but there are others. There are the virtues of acknowledged dependence that MacIntyre describes. Let us start with Aristotle, however.

The reasoning which fully justifies practical judgement and action, on Aristotle's account (N.E. 1144a 31-34) refers us in the end to what is the first premise for all claims of sound practical reasoning,

a premise of the form ‘Since the good and the best is such and such....’ But of course in order to reason soundly about what is best to do here and now, those who have relevant virtues, and above all the virtue of prudent judgment, rarely need and may even be unable to make explicit the chain of justificatory reasoning that their immediate practical reasoning presupposes, while those who lack the virtues will be incapable of sound practical reasoning. (p. 106-107).

In any thesis MacIntyre puts forward which includes Aristotle at a fundamental level, there must be at least some type of further or partial agreement of exactly what, if any, ends might be achieved. Especially if one considers whether those ends, if reasoned properly, could turn out to also be a means. There is a reason why this process matters to us. It is because it is central to our decision-making process for questions like a) Why does this matter at all? b) What is the next right thing for me to do in this circumstance? c) What is best for us to do as a social community of people?

MacIntyre claims on page 107-108:

Practical reasoning is by its nature, on the generally Aristotelian view that I have been taking, reasoning together with others, generally within some determinate set of social relationships. Those relationships are initially formed and then developed as the relationships through which each of us first achieves and is then supported in the status of an independent practical reasoner. They are generally and characteristically first of all relationships of the family and household, then of schools and apprenticeships, and then of the range of practices in which adults of that particular society and culture engage. The making and sustaining of those relationships is inseparable from the development of those dispositions and activities through which each is directed towards becoming an independent practical reasoner. So the good of each cannot be pursued without also pursuing the good of all those who

participate in those relationships. For we cannot have a practically adequate understanding of our own good, of our own flourishing, apart from and independently of the flourishing of that whole set of social relationships in which we have found our place.

At some point in one's life, one must reach the conclusion that many people along the way have contributed to any success one might be enjoying in one's life. Certainly, there must be some element of spiritual development as well as gratitude for the many seasons of one's life as well as blessings. MacIntyre makes it clear throughout his book that there are many people near to us who are suffering, but yet perhaps grateful to be alive. One is reminded that the virtue of kindness takes very little to extend to anyone. If a person gets cross with a neighbour, instead of using the club of anger, direct emotion to the question: how may I be helpful to this person. Remember the examples of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, who both changed an embattled world. The world in many ways is much the same after their time; however, it is much better for having their examples in it. Another such example might be Nelson Mandela. In order to become an independent practical reasoner, one must live in a community in which others, principally one's parents, but not only one's parents, and not only when one is a child, have been willing to give one their time and effort unconditionally. Ghandi , Luther King Jr. and Mandela give us political examples of this, but there must be people throughout a community who manage to give to others selflessly, just as they did, but on a more intimate scale. Just in the way these three leaders gave unconditionally to their causes so must one give in the same way to others, one's family, community, organizations, in order to become an effective independent practical reasoner. One must be prepared to do this even if one never receives anything in return. In this formula, it is all about the kind of giving that makes the chain work. Putting the virtues into action can only produce positive results. MacIntyre refers to the vital link Aristotle provides not only to the virtues, but also to what Aristotle refers to as the best life.

What is Aristotle's version of the best life? Aristotle included the virtues high on his list, as part of living the good life. However, there was more. It was this entire canon of virtues that made a person a very admirable member of society. In fact Aristotle's whole argument seems to be that life is an activity we get to engage in. If we live it according to the virtues, then the best life, or Eudaimonia as Aristotle called it, is the product.

Some people just want to get through life. Others, perhaps at some point, want to find an understanding of human excellence. As humans learn the virtues they can begin at a really basic level. For example, most people know basic right from wrong. By simply practicing doing the next right thing in one's life, one can really begin at any starting point. Let's take an example in human relations which we all have to deal with. Perhaps someone does something one absolutely doesn't agree with. Should one just dive in head first and tell them they are wrong? Maybe not. After all, is it wise to act as judge, jury and executioner of others? If everyone went around intervening judgmentally in everyone else's life, we would just have much more of what we see on the fringes of our world: people breaking up into warring factions. Usually if we adopt a non-judgmental attitude to others, but live as a demonstration of what we think is the best life, we have the best chance of effecting change. By contrast, judgmental intervention breeds resentment.

Now might be a good time to mention of the overall thesis statement of this work. Integrity and selflessness are the keys to what one may call the best life. What is the best life? It is a life way beyond what one ever could have imagined. Through the practice of principles, starting with the cornerstone of honesty, one finds an entire world of the virtues opening up, the same ones Aristotle, MacIntyre and Thomas Aquinas have spoken of. This is important because the practice of these virtues as a way of life will bring about the much desired personality change. This change is nothing short of a transformation much needed to remove the self-centeredness that plagues humanity.

Self-centeredness is a scourge and consumes humans, and through it comes all forms of narcissistic delusions and self-seeking. If there is to be any moral progress, self-centeredness must be removed without regret. Once this is removed from the person and replaced with selflessness, it is possible to fuse integrity and selflessness. Then and only then does one have the perfect combination for living the best life and for living within a flourishing and successful community.

MacIntyre develops this thought in terms of the norms required to sustain productive relationships in a flourishing community. He examines Adam Smith's famous claim about the economic motives of people working together. (1999, p. 116, 117)

It is then only in the context of and by reference to norms of giving and receiving that we can spell out what is involved in different types of affective relationships. It is the acknowledgement of those norms that give us grounds for our expectations of others and for their expectations of us. Affective and sympathetic ties are always more than a matter of affection and sympathy. And in a similar way relationships of rational exchange, governed by norms to which it is to the advantage of each participant to adhere, are also embedded in and sustained by relationships governed by norms of uncalculated and unpredicted giving and receiving. So it is with those institutionalized relationships that make possible the exchange of markets.

It is indeed true that “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* 1, ii). And just as butcher, brewer and baker generally act with regard to their own interest, so too do their customer. But if on entering the butcher’s shop as a habitual customer, I find him collapsing from a heart attack, and I merely remark ‘Ah! Not in a position to sell me my meat to-day, I see,’ and proceed immediately to his competitor’s store to complete my purchase, I will have obviously and grossly damaged my whole relationship to him, including my economic relationship, although I will have done nothing contrary to the norms of the market. Less obviously and less grossly, even if I respond to his condition only by satisfying those minimum requirements that will enable me to rebut quasilegal accusations of irresponsibility – I call an ambulance and the moment the medical technicians arrive I leave – I will still have undermined my relationship to him and his, by my avoidance of my larger responsibility. Market relationships can only be sustained by being embedded in certain types of local nonmarket relationships,

relationships of uncalculated giving and receiving, if they are to contribute to overall flourishing, rather than, as they so often do, undermine and corrupt communal ties.

What is the role of the individual in the construction and maintenance of a moral community? Benevolence in and among one's community of peers is absolutely essential, not only for one's growth as human beings, but also for every aspect of life. A good person may be the only example of goodwill towards others, the virtues in practice, and good character that another person ever sees. Adam Smith's example, cited by MacIntyre, where goods are exchanged in a market, presupposes a community of a shared network of both the giver and the receiver. And yet lots of people will remain selfish and inward looking. They will continue to ask what's in it for me. It may be only through a major life defeat that the development of an open mind occurs. If an example of virtue is presented to them at the right time, it just might make the difference.

What is the relationship between benevolence – the constant exercise of goodwill, the sharing of goods – and selflessness? MacIntyre describes a relationship to others in which the virtues of acknowledged dependence predominate. But what exactly are these virtues? Benevolence is the virtue of goodwill towards others. Selflessness is the virtue of eliminating self-centeredness. Integrity is the virtue of standing up for one's deepest and most well-founded principles. All of these are necessary elements of a happy, well-rounded life. I think that these virtues constitute the virtues of acknowledged dependence. The reason we must eliminate self-centeredness and selfishness is that we live as creatures in a community in which we are at various points in our lives wholly dependent on others. Recall, that I defined selflessness in chapter 2 as putting others in one's life ahead of oneself. It is not a pure form of benevolence, in which the needs of others is all that determines one's actions and our relation to others does not enter the picture. It is a matter of getting outside of self-centered, self-concerned thinking. It is way of relating to others which puts our relation to them on a higher plane. The value of MacIntyre's account of our status as dependent rational animals is that it demonstrates the need to expand our understanding of the virtues to include the virtues of selflessness and integrity.



## Chapter 4: ARISTOTLE AND AQUINAS

### INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters of this thesis I described the relationship between the concepts of integrity, selflessness and the virtues, in particular the virtues of acknowledged dependence. I have claimed that these three things are essential components of the good life and human happiness. To support this claim I now examine the nature of happiness and the good life through a discussion of Aristotle's views and the views of St Thomas Aquinas. The key concern here is the relationship between virtue and happiness. MacIntyre's idea that virtues of acknowledged dependence are reflective of our status as dependent rational animals does not yet establish a clear link between personal virtue and personal happiness. It provides a link between community flourishing and personal virtue, but another link is needed. To explore the possibility of a further link between personal happiness and personal virtue, I turn to the philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas.

What is happiness? According to Aristotle, it is the highest good. So why do so many humans have so much trouble with something seemingly so valuable? How can it be so elusive to us if it truly is the highest good? Perhaps people go about looking for happiness in the wrong manner, or may not really recognize it when they see it. Then again, people may look for happiness in false things: things that are not lasting, like money, possessions, property and the like. These are fleeting and soon lost. A key claim in my thesis is that happiness is an inside job. What this means is that gratitude, integrity, practice and belief in the virtues creates a new and vital happiness. The results that are felt at once are not only surprising but also extremely concrete and beneficial for one's life. The formula resembles Aristotle's account of eudaimonia in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1097b).

Now happiness more than anything else, seems unconditionally complete, since we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we could choose each of them even if it had no further result, but we

also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

At this point, I would like to signal what I take to be a limitation on Aristotle's perspective here. Aristotle claims that happiness is an end in itself. But does this idea travel through the ages to our own time? Can we afford to think of happiness as an end in itself? What is the value of my own happiness if it does not contribute to the happiness of others? According to my theory of the happiness bank, which I develop in the next chapter, happiness is a shared investment, one that pays dividends throughout a community. It is not a merely personal goal, it is a public goal. Aristotle involves the good of others in his own conception of happiness in a distinctive way. He writes (1097b):

The same conclusion (that happiness is complete) also appears to follow from self-sufficiency, since the complete good seems to be self-sufficient. Now what we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife and in general for friends, and fellow-citizens, since a human being is a naturally political (animal). Here, however, we must impose some limit; for if we extend the good to parents' parents and children's children and to friends of friends, we shall go on without limit; but we must examine this another time. Anyhow, we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choice worthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does (N.E.1097b).

When it comes to Aristotle, happiness has little to do with how we feel and how well we are doing by ourselves, and a whole lot more to do with who we are in society. In Aristotle's society, Classical Greece, status was the fundamental mark of a successful life. For Aristotle, it may have been the elite of society but they were not measured by their money alone; for example one might be quite wealthy indeed, but without friendship one could not be happy. The perfect happiness or '*Eudamonia*' translates as a type of objective well-being and success and this success must happen in the context of a flourishing community of friends and fellow citizens. The contrast between Aristotle's view and my view is that Aristotle sees happiness as a kind of personal flourishing within a flourishing community and I see it as a kind of personal achievement, a deep and abiding enjoyment of life that is meaningless without its being directed outward at the happiness of others.

Much of this personal achievement has to do with how one achieves happiness in the first place. When people choose virtuous actions for their own sake they are choosing the highest form of living. By a simple act of doing the right thing and continuous action in this direction, good moral character is established. After a time, people begin to take these actions for their own sake. They become self-evidently choice-worthy to all who understand them. The results eventually bring about an inner peace, an inner happiness, and serenity that no person or thing in this world can take away from us. When people choose virtuous actions for their own sake they are choosing the highest form of living.

We cannot afford to live an isolated life. This will not promote happiness nor is it self-sufficient. Even nuns live in a nunnery and never, or rarely, alone. The isolation chamber does not even help prisoners in prison, it usually has the opposite effect. (See Lisa Guenther 2014.) Humans are social animals; I believe there is no other avenue to happiness.

We know that for Aristotle the highest good is happiness. So then, it would follow that a person with perfect happiness lacks for nothing. This could mean perhaps that, no matter what they have or don't have, they would still be able to maintain their happiness. So for a person who practices the virtues in life we might say that are working on or building on what I would call a happiness bank.

At this point in my discussion, I would like to introduce my of a happiness bank and contrast it with Aristotle's concept of Eudaimonia. I will return to a discussion of the happiness

in Chapter 5. My concept of the happiness bank is repository of positive feeling towards others and generous and virtuous actions towards others that is both a personal state and a shared community condition. When we act well towards others we add to a community of virtue. We make available to others the idea of a life that is directed virtuous feeling and action towards others. It becomes a shared fact of the community's moral condition. It is a real thing, not a mere perception of a thing. It alters one's community. And it alters individuals themselves. So the happiness bank has two aspects. As one makes deposits into the happiness bank one both improves the morality of one's community and oneself. And the more deposits, the more substantial the bank becomes and the greater the community's stock of moral goodness. The community becomes a better place and a happier one. The person, the depositor, becomes a better and a happier member of the community.

The more deposits of good deeds towards others – things that are pointed towards our shared, larger good – the better. This happiness bank is important because it can never become full enough with the virtues one performs; it should become a lifetime practice. The reason is twofold. One is that happiness is a byproduct of living the right kind of life and one would desire this. However, the second and most important reason is that we may one day need this happiness bank and call upon it and draw out from it at a crucial moment to help the ill, the disabled, the abandoned, and the down trodden. And we may need it for ourselves.

If the deposits we make in the happiness bank are meaningful, right actions, they will automatically make us happy. This happiness is infectious. These right virtuous actions may now even become part of a community's bank of happiness. In this way the deposits are doubled, and tripled and gain interest. I think that deposits into the happiness bank do not sit idle; they increase and communities become happier and more resilient. The growth of virtue in a community is like compound interest. And with it happiness within the community.

One point of difference between my concept of the happiness bank and an ordinary savings bank is that, in a savings bank, one maintains ownership of one's deposits. They are shared together in order to grow wealth, but one may always withdraw what one owns. In a happiness bank, by contrast, the moral wealth, happiness and resilience of a community are distributed to others on the basis of need and membership. In this sense, a happiness bank operates more like a cooperative venture than a traditional bank.

Let us look at the differences between the Aristotelian way of life, two and a half thousand years ago, and then the benefit of the happiness bank in the twenty-first century. Firstly, Aristotle was interested in the good and noble citizen. He took deep pleasure in all success, which is the opposite of humility. He approved of living well and doing beautiful things. He also valued successful relations; but, with whom? Perhaps only relations with the well thought of, highly educated, upper class of society were valuable to him. In reality, Aristotle's philosophy overall was not bankable. There were no real deposits going into any happiness bank, no capital, in terms of investment, that could ever be drawn out at a later time. The reason is the Greek subjects were not treated as equals in Classical Greek society. I would argue, if we look through the concept of the happiness bank, Aristotle's lack of humility would not allow his fellow Greek subjects such terms of investiture. The philosophy of humility as it applies to life for us is a strength, not a weakness, which I would argue is the opposite of Aristotle's view and a key to the happiness bank.

Now let us look at some of the other things we might find in the happiness bank itself. To list just a few, there is cheerfulness, laughter, positivity and resilience. When we have these things, we are unlikely to sink back into self-pity. We will find pleasure in small things in life. We become forward looking. We possess a sense of self-esteem to show to others. And of course, we have a sense of subjective well-being, or happiness. That is, we have a deep and abiding experience of enjoyment of life and a sense that it is good.

A moral community should be based on teaching children that instant gratification is self-defeating and does nothing for communities. Let us take an example:

*John gets into his car driving on a suspended license but never goes to court to clear up the ticket. He must go to his job to keep a roof over his head and food on the table. Everything goes well for a time, then one day he is pulled over for a broken taillight. Another bad result for John: a trip to the watch house, and then a session before a judge, all because he failed to answer the earlier charge. A result of pure negligence or belligerence, it adds to John's well of resentment and unhappiness. Given enough of these types of episodes and resentments, John may become an unhappy outlaw of society.*

We would somehow want John to make contributions of his own to a happiness bank. But how can this be accomplished considering the path he has set himself on? Perhaps through a

court appointed mentor, John could see a new example of what happiness is like. A vision for others is just like that: it shows them, through an example of many years of happiness, just what may be achieved. This is not a perfect science. However, years of freedom from the emotions of self-pity and self-centeredness, with only the wish to make large interest bearing deposits in a happiness bank to be shared with all, is the answer the virtues point us towards.

Happiness is a better way to act and react to life. Life seems to take on a new found freedom and inner peace when viewed in this light. This same light of happiness, which allows us to make our deposits each day, can readily be seen by others. Unlike worldly goods, the bankable existence we live in is one in which we constantly must think of others and their needs. If newcomers exposed to the happiness bank could see no overall purpose or benefit or especially happiness, they would not want it for themselves. A mentor or exemplar may be the only example of a truly bankable way of life they will ever see. The true question about this way of life when looking at all the other alternatives in the world, is how fleeting the others are on the scale of happiness. Things measured in pure monetary terms such as possessions, houses, yachts are only temporal and are soon lost.

Aristotle remarks in the N.E. 1097b:

... we think happiness is most choice worthy of all goods, since it is not counted as one good among many. If it were counted as one among many, then, clearly, we think that the addition of the smallest of goods would make it more choice worthy; for (the smallest good) that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods (so creating a good larger than the original good), and the larger of the two goods is always more choice worthy. (But we do not think any addition can make happiness more choice worthy; hence it is most choice worthy).

Happiness, then, is something complete and self-sufficient, and does not compete with other goods and is not improved by adding anything else.

## AQUINAS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS

In his book ‘Dependent Rational Animals’ (1999), which I discussed in chapter 3, Alasdair MacIntyre makes it absolutely clear that in order to get, keep and maintain the virtues, which promote happiness in us and others, what one gives away to others may be disproportionate to anything one may receive. The willingness to think of others needs first must be unconditional.

MacIntyre claims: (1999, p. 111)

Without such virtues and the rule-following integral to their exercise, we will not only be deficient in discharging our responsibilities, but we will also be unable to deliberate adequately with others about the allocation of responsibilities. And, since such deliberation is necessary for achieving our common good, we will frustrate the achievement of that common good. It was upon this aspect of these rules that Aquinas focused attention, when he characterized them as included among the precepts of the natural law. On Aquinas’s account, for a precept to be a law of any kind, it must be a precept of reason (*Summa Theologiae* 90, 1) directed to a common good (90, 2) and promulgated to a community by someone with the requisite authority (90, 3, 4). The precepts of the natural law are those precepts promulgated by God through reason without conformity to which human beings cannot achieve their common good.

Aquinas supplements Aristotle’s account of the relationship between virtue and happiness with an account of the common good and preconditions for our achieving the common good. Aquinas holds that these preconditions involve a willingness to follow the virtuous direction of a person in authority. Aquinas grounds the virtues in natural law, which in turn reflects God’s will and providential concern for the world.

In my opinion, moral authority really only exists as moral exemplars. For instance, John, in the example above, will not find virtue and happiness by merely following the edicts of a

judge, but must be inspired by a mentor to invest in a community's happiness bank. His way into a life of virtue is through the example of others who are both happy and good. Once he follows the example, he will discover that there is no way back to his former life. The recognition of moral authority comes after this achievement, not before it. He may come to know and love that moral authority. It may also be that the source of this authority comes to him in an act of grace. But the important point for me in this discussion is to contrast Aquinas' appeal to authority as a precondition of virtue with my own view of the role of moral exemplars as a precondition of becoming virtuous.

Aquinas lists the cardinal virtues as temperance, prudence (i.e. practical wisdom), justice and courage. To these he adds three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. The cardinal virtues would be recognized by anyone in Classical Greece, but the theological virtues are new. These cardinal and theological virtues are a path to integrity, love of this world, one's fellow man, selflessness. The role of faith as a virtue is controversial, as is hope. For me, the key virtue in addition to the cardinal virtues is charity, which comes closest to my conception of selflessness.

This is not to say that a person's concern for their own happiness undermines this charity or selflessness. As MacIntyre puts it:

‘Hence it may seem that a radical justification for my action will always be of the form: Because to act will contribute to my achievement of my good, qua human being. It follows that if, in the type of example that I have outlined, I do what the virtue of just generosity requires and act so as to aid the stranger in need, my reason for action, if it is a good reason, will never be simply that the stranger was in urgent need, but must also be that by acting so as to meet that need I contributed to the achievement of my own good. There is then after all a further justification for aiding the stranger (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 159).

MacIntyre is saying that when I act virtuously I am contributing to my own good as well as the good of others. Ideals of virtue and personal happiness combine to give me reasons to act. They cannot be properly separated from each other. In helping another person, I am at the same time



helping myself and there is no good reason for me to deny this when I reflect upon my actions and their motivations.

Aquinas says that all humans wish for ultimate fulfillment. This fulfillment is that humans desire their perfection, whether they know it or not. This, he adds, is the same fulfillment in which human beings' final end consists (ST 1a11 ae1.7). Although there is much disagreement about what a final end consists of, Aquinas, like Aristotle, believes that end is happiness, and is a perfect good.

So here we see where Aquinas divides the human being into two parts. Somehow he makes the concrete decision to go even farther than Aristotle when it comes to the virtues. He tries to complete the entire list for man to try to follow. By practicing these virtues in our lives with integrity and selflessness towards all other humans, one begins to get the picture that not owning one's life is the best life possible.

Aquinas adds a concept of natural law to Aristotle's concept of a virtuous person and a good life. The natural law is a set of rules for conduct that reflect both human nature and God's intentions for us. What is the relationship between the precepts of natural law and the virtues?

According to MacIntyre

The precepts of Natural Law however include much more than rules. For among the precepts of the natural law are precepts which enjoin us to do whatever the virtues require of us (94, 3). We are enjoined to do whatever it is that courage or justice or temperateness demand on this or that occasion and always, in so acting, to act prudently. Notice that at the level of practice we need no reason for some particular action over and above that it is in this situation what one or more of the virtues require. The acts required by the virtues are each of them worth performing for their own sake. They are indeed always also a means to something further, just because they are constitutive parts of human flourishing. But it is precisely as acts worth performing for their own sake that they are such parts.

So if one lives a life of compassion, generosity and justice, all for the sake of other humans, surely one is living as natural law dictates. Practicing these many virtues is one's just reply to the question of life, and a sufficient idea of what is a good and meaningful life. By a constant searching of oneself, one may find that selflessness and integrity that helps one to realize that one cannot own one's own life. All we have to do to test this theory is to think of any or all of the people we have known in our own lives. They meticulously plan out their lives in this way or that and when it does not go their way they get extremely upset. Such people treat their own lives as if it were a possession. It is as if their life is like a car, and they get upset when it breaks down.

Is it possible that one really has to have the understanding of the metaphysical basis of this answer? One could speculate about a power greater than oneself or not, but humans have argued over the question for many centuries. We could also consider ourselves to be the most intelligent agents in this universe, the beginning and the end of all life forms. But are we really the beginning and the end of all life forms or just one of many? Most of us humans, when we are truly honest with ourselves, realize we have very little power over anything whether it be our day to day existence or even the longer term. So the answer would seem to be that one is powerless over the entire outcome of one's life. The only thing one has any control over is the attitude and actions that one takes in each day. And this is important because if these virtuous un-self-centered actions are directed towards humanity, one would make the world a better, just place to live. Obviously happiness would follow because serving humanity is a human's highest purpose. There is no other. Thus, the result could be that a new power for living a life of integrity and selflessness will flow into one's life.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Aquinas set out to develop the list of virtues he found in Aristotle. He describes what he called the cardinal virtues and then the sub virtues. The four cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, temperance and courage (ST I-II, 61.2). We shall get into all of these in due course, however, let us in the first place, set out some of the ways that Aquinas defines just what a virtue is. He makes mention that all of the virtues make a contribution to our rational perfection and that all acts of virtue are prescribed by natural law. (ST I-II, 94.4)

Aquinas thinks that human happiness is directly related to a relationship with God. And that relationship makes our lives as close to perfect as it is possible for us to be here on Earth. It

is when we perform the virtues in relation to God, that we receive this happiness in return. He says that human beings “attain their last end by knowing and loving God” (ST I-II, 2.8).

The cardinal virtues aim at helping us to act. Prudence helps us decide on a plan, courage helps us to see our plans through to the end. Temperance stops us from overstepping the line and hurting others out of weakness and selfish desire. It also gives us a sense of humility; without self-control we cannot play our assigned part in the world. Justice helps us to remember that we are not the only people on the planet and that other people need to be considered and have claims.

For Aquinas, one can never achieve complete or total happiness in life here on Earth. He believed that a union with God is the only thing that makes this possible. For our purpose here, as mentioned earlier, we need not debate whether Aquinas was right or wrong about this. What one will hold to is what is right, and in however or whatever world Saint Thomas may have existed, he helped to, no doubt, transform our understanding of human nature for the better. And anything that transforms a human being’s attitude for the better will enliven their spirit. A person’s spirit is their overall attitude to life: the compass through which they live.

Another way to think of whether or not one’s action is good or bad, might be through the ability of human reason; because this is the measuring stick of just how we evaluate our own and other human acts. However, Aquinas once again presses the issue, and so he does with natural law. He makes the claim that every law comes from eternal law, which is grounded in God. Aquinas uses a lot of different terminology all to explain what he claims natural law is. It is an extension of the eternal law. Then just for good measure, he says that God is the one who ordains all of this, including final happiness, because that same God gives us a knowledge of what is good. Saint Thomas says these things are just weaved into the very fabric of our nature. And because of this the natural desires we have help us to continue the kind of flourishing that is good and proper for the human race. He also thinks humans have the unique ability to reason along the lines of what he terms ‘first principle’ which is fundamental to one’s life. These natural laws and principles bring out practical reasoning in humans in such a way that evil may be avoided and good done. Aquinas would go on to indicate that as people on Earth our thoughts about just what part we should play or how we should act, if we do so by virtue – by our natural self-determination to decide for or against evil or goodness in this world – are the things that can

propel us towards perfection as humans (ST I-II, 94.2 – 94.3). One needs to ask the question, just which way is my rational self, better off? Perhaps, it is just trying to do better and striving for some of the things Aquinas speaks of.

One purpose of this thesis is to point out that Saint Thomas Aquinas' moral philosophy was mostly in agreement with Aristotle; especially when it comes to the term of Eudaimonia or happiness. He also agrees that working the virtues is absolutely necessary to achieve absolute and total happiness. However, there are a few differences between the two philosophers, mainly, in Saint Thomas's case, it comes from what he refers to as a relationship with God, or beatitude. He claims that we cannot achieve final happiness on our own. This may be somewhat shocking or even disliked by many when first encountered, but Aquinas says this beatitude, this relationship, may only be accomplished by being virtuous. He then indicates how humanity is drawn forward to supernatural happiness, given the full grace of God.

Aquinas lists the theological virtues that help to bring about this happiness; the ones listed by Saint Paul in the Corinthians: faith, hope, charity, or what can be thought of as love. Aquinas claims that loving one's neighbor may be as close to God as one will ever get here on Earth. He goes further by stating if a person says he loves his God but does not love his neighbor, he is conflicted. He must love both.

This virtue of charity Aquinas speaks of should be just as relevant today as in his time. After all, it contributes to one's happiness, for we know it is a virtue and it contributes to humankind. Charity, because of its reciprocal nature of giving to and receiving, if Aquinas is right, is a type of supernatural wisdom and intuitively beneficial process.

## **CARDINAL VIRTUES AND THEIR SUB-VIRTUES**

I will return the discussion now to cardinal virtues and their characteristics. Just as temperance is a cardinal virtue, so is prudence in the same category. Some sub-virtues of these are chastity, sobriety, and abstinence, which basically stand for a victory over one's appetite of sex, victory over one's appetite for drink, and doing without pleasures. Surprisingly enough though, Aquinas also argues for the fact that humility is also a part of temperance (ST II-II 161.4). The problem is that humility is something one may not achieve fully. One can only try to aim for a sense of the

tempering of one's instincts to the best of one's ability. One will never achieve perfection. Humility is just about trying to do the best one may be, and to restrain temptations to think too well of oneself. Moderation is the key in all things whether for a factory worker, airline pilot, or philosopher. As humans we need to avoid extremes that can lead us to misery and selfishness. What are these extremes? Number one is the delusion that being self-centered in any or grasping all things for oneself is a winning strategy in life.

What is the relationship between humility and self-abnegation? In order to live a more useful and flourishing life one ought to include humility as a guide to one's aspirations. As we reflect upon, our motives, our actions, and our intentions, we should ask the following question.. Are we once again trying to be like the lead actor (page 30), arranging everything to suite our own self-centred ideas about how the play should be run? Then, on the other hand, we could be like the golf caddie (page,27) just satisfied to play our part in the big picture of life and the golf course. If one can answer yes, to the second question one manifests the virtue of humility.

Going back to Aquinas's list of virtues, he includes meekness, clemency and studiousness as a part of the virtue of temperance (ST II-II 161.4). These may help to restrain bottled up anger and especially resentment in people. When people desire to get even, this can be especially dangerous because this rage can and does turn inward like battery acid and eats its own container. With the virtue of courage, humans can get a sense of nobility and endurance, and stand tough in some pretty dangerous circumstances. Even when life and limb are in danger or are threatened, people will stand steadfast because they possess courage, and they have seen its works performed for them (ST II-II 123.6). Self-confidence will come with a person who comes through life's events with courage. Where does this courage come from? Perhaps one has the ability to see a purpose for one's life's work that is far greater than one's own life (ST II-II 128.1).

Theological virtues, in particular hope, also play a role in human flourishing. For one who has lived in hope for many decades, it allows one to try to think of others first and to live with both selflessness and integrity. Hope is an attitude towards the future. It is a starting point; it allows one to be honest with oneself and to see a positive future for oneself. Patience and perseverance are needed each day as well.

From the precepts of natural law, it should be fairly simple to make pertinent life decisions on what one ought to do in any particular circumstance, and confusion can easily be avoided. This is simply the virtue of Prudence. According to Aquinas, prudence is a matter of thinking that enables us as human beings to think all of our actions, as well as reactions to life, through to the end result. Once again, Aquinas cautions us not to take any actions that interrupt good choices for our happiness. As humans progress we must always seek counsel, look to proper judgement and use prudence (ST II-II 47.8).

There are several other sub-virtues joined to this cardinal virtue called Prudence, as Saint Thomas sees it. They are things such as caution, memory, circumspection, intelligence, foresight, docility, reason and shrewdness. Without any or all of these, one might make mental mistakes that could prevent one from living a happy virtuous life (ST II-II 49.1-8).

So perhaps by good judgement, a measure of restraint modeled by one's own philosophy, one could continue through these virtues to point towards the overall philosophy of *Integrity and Selflessness*.

One of the ways that Aquinas tries to demonstrate the goodness of humanity is his argument that all simple acts are for the sake of a single end. He says that this is the same for all people. So what is that end? As for Aristotle, that end is happiness. As humans, we will want to aim at the best we can do towards happiness here on earth knowing one will never completely reach it. Still we strive onward. Aquinas never really defines for anyone what this happiness may consist in. However, he makes it abundantly clear all humans seek some sort of fulfilment as we trudge our roads of human desire.

Peter Kreeft notes in the *Summa of the Summa* that "when Saint Thomas says that happiness, unlike wealth, is good when possessed, not spread, he does not mean that our happiness is not in fact increased when we make others happy, but that the essential meaning of 'happiness' is the satisfaction of an individual's desires. These may and should include the desire to make others happy too (Kreeft, 1990, p. 361 (28)). I would go further than Aquinas in this. I think that the desire to make others happy is the most important of our desires and the key to one's own happiness, in particular because it takes one out of self-centredness.

“For man to serve things of any sort, according to Saint Thomas is to reverse the order of reality” (Kreeft 1990, p.362 (30)). Kreeft continues by observing that “St Thomas here assumes that man is an end, not a means. Yet he is not the final end. In Article 7, “*On the contrary*”, he says that man is to be loved not for his own sake (as final end) but for God’s sake. God is to be adored, man loved, and things used.” (Kreeft 1990, p. 362 (30)). This religious vision of what it is that makes human beings worth loving is not something I propose in this thesis. In the concept the happiness bank and how it works, discussed in the next chapter, Aquinas’ religious assumption is not needed. This is not to rule out Aquinas’ account, but I wish to remain neutral about it.

## **CONCLUSION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS**

To sum up Aquinas’s view of happiness and how it differs from Aristotle’s, I note that Aquinas distinguishes between perfect happiness and imperfect happiness. He writes: “...man’s happiness is two-fold, one perfect, and the other imperfect. And by perfect happiness we are to understand that which attains to the true notion of happiness, and by imperfect happiness that which does not attain thereto, but partakes of some particular likeness of happiness” (ST I-II, 3.6). Perfect happiness is dependent upon our relation to God. He writes “Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence” (ST I-II, 3.8). Aquinas thinks that imperfect happiness is a partial vision of what complete happiness is like. It is a vision of beautiful happiness that we cannot achieve here on Earth. Imperfect happiness comes from virtuous activity, but requires other things as well. Aquinas says “...Rectitude of the will is necessary for happiness both antecedently and concomitantly.... Concomitantly, because as stated above ... final happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, Which is the very essence of goodness. So that the will of him who sees the essence of God, of necessity, loves, whatever he loves, in subordination to God, just as the will of him who sees not God’s Essence, of necessity, loves whatever he loves, under the common notion of good which he knows. And this is precisely what makes the will right. Wherefore it is evident that happiness cannot be without a right will. (ST I-II 4.4). So, for Aquinas, living virtuously is necessary for happiness. Aquinas also thinks, like Aristotle, that external goods (such as health and friends) are necessary for happiness on Earth. But perfect happiness does not require them. “For imperfect happiness,

such as can be had in this life, external goods are necessary, not as belonging to the essence of happiness, but by serving as instruments to happiness, which consists in an operation of virtue..." (ST I-II 4.7). And he says, "On the other hand, such goods as these are nowise necessary for perfect happiness, which consists in seeing God." (ST I-II 4.7). Aquinas has a religious idea of perfect happiness, but an idea of imperfect happiness closely related to Aristotle's idea of Eudaimonia. Aquinas gets his notion of perfect happiness (Contemplation of God) from Aristotle. It comes from Aristotle's discussion of contemplation in book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, Aristotle asserts that a morally good life, by itself, results in a kind of secondary, somewhat incomplete, happiness and it is this that I am concerned with in this thesis.

In my view neither Aristotle nor Aquinas fully explains the relationship between personal virtue and personal happiness. Aristotle does not appreciate the way individual happiness requires humility. And he does not appreciate the reciprocal nature of how humility and happiness work hand in hand. My happiness is directly proportional to what I give to others. Aristotle thinks that happiness is achieving noble things, but the important thing for a person's happiness is that they are making others happy too.

Aquinas, by contrast, thinks that perfect happiness is supernatural happiness and exists through one's relationship to God. Although I do not claim to refute him, I believe that human happiness can be gained by having a sense of humility and thinking of others first. This may be imperfect happiness or it might be perfect happiness. I don't claim to know. But it is happiness nonetheless. What is required next is an account of the happiness bank and the relationship between virtue and happiness that can be found in it. This is the topic of Chapter 5.



## **CHAPTER 5: THE HAPPINESS BANK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

My concept of the happiness bank is a repository of positive feeling towards others and generous and virtuous actions towards others that is both a personal state and a shared community condition. When we practice the virtues with others in mind, the outcome is almost invariably good. When we take actions in this manner we make available the idea of a good life to others. We help others directly by acting virtuously, but we also point them towards integrity. We become an example of what is possible and in this way add to the community and help others indirectly. We give others a perception of benevolence that becomes available to them. This is what it means to make a deposit into the happiness bank. It has three aspects. First, one improves the community directly through action. Second, one improves the community through example. Third, one improves oneself by becoming happier and increasing one's integrity. These three aspects feed off of each other and mutually enhance each other. This is why it makes sense to think of the happiness bank as a bank. Deposits grow; membership grows; benevolence grows; shared happiness grows.

The other aspect of a bank is that one may make withdrawals from it. When tragedy strikes a person, they should be able to rely on others to help and console them. The bank has many members who were once in this position who would welcome the opportunity to help and console others. The repository of good will and integrity which is the happiness bank is available to others in their time of need. The bank represents the moral resources of a community. Without a community that cares, there could be no bank. To withdraw resources from the bank is to appeal to the community to dispense benevolent actions, to care and to help.

### **HOW DOES SELFLESSNESS RELATE TO THE HAPPINESS BANK?**

What is the way of unique happiness that is most beneficial to humans? Humans seem to benefit from reciprocal relationships with each other. This unique and beneficial happiness is not something one should keep to oneself like something found in a treasure chest. Just what exactly is this newfound higher plane of happiness and what is the relationship of selflessness to it? I have been trying to spell out the thought that integrity and selflessness are two sides of the same

coin. These two attributes of human life can help take people out of themselves and think less like self-centered egotistical humans at the center of the universe. In this way humility has a chance to do its work in human hearts. People begin to care more about others and their problems than anything that could possibly be going wrong in their own lives. They become more generous and benevolent towards others. They no longer look for any benefit in return. The positive realm of happiness in one's life, and to let others begin to see the benefits of a virtuous and selfless investiture that will pay dividends for a lifetime, should not be missed. This is the way of happiness that is most beneficial to humans.

The whole concept of the happiness bank is really quite elementary at its core. Bentham and Mill introduced the idea of the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people. As utilitarians, they thought that it was always right to try to achieve this. Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion of dependent rational animals showed me how benevolence and virtue is a key to human flourishing and happiness, giving our dependent and rational natures. Aristotle argued that happiness is the highest good, and Saint Thomas Aquinas argued that virtue promotes integrity and love of the world. The result is, with faith and God's grace, supernatural happiness. In a secular mode, the result is human happiness.

Let me introduce three examples of happiness and its absence.

Example 1: Someone who is happy because they practice the virtues and feel good about themselves and they practice benevolence towards others in a selfless way.

Example 2: Someone who is happy because they are successful. They have a successful career, a good reputation, a successful marriage, and material possessions.

Example 3: Someone who is happy because they get what they most want and take pleasure from it, for example, someone who is a snow skier and who skis all over the world.

Now consider example 3. To ski is what really makes this person the most happy of anything on earth. However, the snow skier only has a beautiful skiing life for himself. Imagine that one day he breaks a leg and collar bone in a skiing accident. He has nothing to fall back on. He is a member of no happiness bank. Therefore his beautiful life of skiing is suspended.

The most important difference between the three examples is that the person in example 1 is not invested in self and does not draw happiness from some contingent aspect of the self. By contrast, in example 3, the skier is happy before his accident in a sense, but this is a false happiness. It has no secure foundation. When things go wrong for him he has nothing to fall back on. The nature of his happiness is built on false pretenses. It is built on a lonely and isolated pleasure.

The second example is of happiness based on pride and self-esteem. Because she has got all these great things in her life, she has proved to the world, she thinks, what true happiness is. But it is false because it is also selfish and self-centered. Its foundation is not based on any type of true integrity. The minute the successful person's success falls flat, they have no basis for happiness.

The first example is completely different. If you are selfless and practicing integrity, it doesn't matter what you have or don't have. Since you care about others more than you care about yourself, you will continue to practice the things that bring about happiness for others and consequently yourself. This is a mutually enhance each other. This is a kind of happiness that builds and grows on its own. It doesn't require success or privilege or great possessions. The happiness bank is based on this kind of selfless happiness. The bank deposits grow because selfless happiness and personal happiness work together.

It is the nature of finding this treasure of so much goodwill within oneself that one would want to give it away to others. Selflessness is to hold other human beings in higher regard than one holds oneself. Therefore, the paradoxical intent of the happiness bank is met when, by making regular interest bearing deposits into the bank, we show others the exact nature of the cause and effect of the bank. It is an effect that comes from the inside out.

What are some current examples of selflessness? Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King and even Abraham Lincoln are positive examples. They all saw a type of work for humanity that lay before them, that needed to be done; selflessly set about doing it; and as a result, of doing good things for others, their happiness could remain robust in the face of nearly anything they might come across in their lives. Not only did they acquire dividends but so did others in their community, who would learn from the historical examples they set. They not only set selfless examples of a type of higher happiness, moreover

they sent the message of the newfound freedom from selfish anxiety that comes with this way of life. And when one puts rationality, flourishing and benevolence of both human and sentient beings at the forefront of a bankable way of life, one's own wellbeing is bound to be affected. These affects are easily seen and readable by almost anyone at a human level. They become part of our very nature; and once we load this part called selflessness into the happiness bank, with integrity, this threefold philosophy is bound to lead to what humans know as happiness. To be happy is a self-evident human right, and something that is intrinsically good, and is an end in itself. Selfless happiness is something that nobody can rightfully take away from you. The memories we create through the actions we take can last a lifetime, for ourselves and others, as we make our deposits in the happiness bank: these are the things we cherish. No person, place or thing on this earth may rightfully remove these memories from us.

So how else does selflessness play a part in the happiness bank? First of all the happiness bank, if worked properly, between ourselves and others, always allows us to be free from the destructive emotions of anger and resentment. It is the fact that most humans are self-centered, the opposite of selfless. When things don't go their way they get angry. Anger only leads to futility and self-pity. In this way the spirit gets cut off, self-centeredness comes in and humans are no longer giving to others selflessly. One cannot afford things that could block us from our sense of happiness, integrity and selflessness. We will want to be patient and tolerant of humanity and hopeful of their future participation in the happiness bank and the spirit in it will take them to better things. With each person we come across, we should ask ourselves in a selfless manner, how may I be of assistance to each and every one of them?

## **HAPPINESS AS A BANKABLE WAY OF LIFE**

And so why do I, as a person, find this way of life to include the ideals, concepts and virtues we have discussed within the happiness bank so important and something whole communities would want to essentially subscribe to?

Will people have the desire to keep topping up the happiness bank for the good of all concerned? People have gained material possessions and lost them, sometimes many times over in their lifetime. I am speaking in terms of peace of mind, serenity and of course our ultimate good, human happiness. It is a cliché, but a true and paradoxical one, that we must give away whatever we

have so that we may keep it. A person may have lost, regained and perhaps lost again all of their important worldly possessions, but in the process find a true treasure. That treasure opens for them in the realization of human capital. Let us take an example:

*Bill loses everything he owns through a bitter divorce settlement. He is left with very little after he pays out his portion of expenses and child support. It looks as though Bill's life is to be like this for years to come. He may never ever own a home again. However, through Bill's attitude adjustment to his circumstances he begins to make small deposits into the happiness bank. It was not Bill's overwhelming circumstances that needed changing, it was his attitude and outlook on life. Moreover, these deposits in the happiness bank need not be huge especially in Bill's case, remember he does not have much. The real difference maker for someone in Bill's circumstances is that he can find community organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army and the Rotary that he can become involved in, to help him turn his small fundamental deposits into much larger ones. Bill helps others, thus making deposits in the happiness bank, he undergoes a psychic change. This allows him to feel and do things he could never do before.*

The focus of all this comes into view when Bill, somewhere down the road, realizes, after taking these actions for some time, that even though he has regained his material things as a result of his actions, they are only important to him as they help him to help others find the happiness bank or see a glimpse of what happiness is when in troubled times.

So the answer to the question: Will people keep topping up their happiness bank, is yes, once they see the overwhelming evidence in favor of it. Simply put, we, like so many people try to live a life of self-propulsion, i.e. a life devoted to satisfying self-directed desires. This type of self-centered being is strictly unmanageable. The reason is, we are constantly racing from thought to thought instead of from positive reinforced action to action. The virtues acted on properly placed in the happiness bank tell the why of it. We simply can and must have a reason to believe we are taking right harmonious actions. And it can also be an action harmonious with, not just ourselves or our community or our consciousness, but with the world.

In the beginning and even now, many years later deposits into the happiness bank will be varied. We must realize if these deposits are for us alone, we will get very little benefit from them. We must put ourselves first and foremost in another person's shoes. We may be called upon to sit long

days or nights in many situations, with despairing families, wives or loved ones, even children. One needs to set this as an exemplary way of life for others to not only want, but also to follow.

However, there may be those who might call this happiness bank and its succeeding way of life a type of utopia which just isn't possible for humans or logical. Moreover, they would point out that no community or individuals are happy all the time. In fact, they would embrace the fact that a great part of our world is indeed miserable. Based on one's experience the truth seems to be that misery shares good company. Therefore, for those of us who treasure everyone's happiness, to manufacture misery just for the sake of being right is no justification at all. On the other hand, the deliberate manufacture of an ultimate happiness made from virtues performed well for others to witness, makes a truly bankable decision that will yield great dividends going forward. Once a person, anyone, is able to tap into this happiness bank and doing so becomes a way of life, they have a responsibility to pass it on to others.

The happiness bank does not work strictly based on deposits. If this were the case, the entire premise of the happiness bank concept would never work. The idea has been derived from the relationship between integrity, selflessness and happiness, that allows humans to add their own virtuous actions and to want to volunteer. Free riding on the happiness bank, that is, making withdrawals without at any stage making deposits, is never an issue. One does not withdraw happiness itself from the happiness bank. One withdraws the help, consolation, and good will from the community, which can result later in happiness, but is not itself happiness. It is true, that the free-rider gains a benefit from the community, and may come to see the benefits of contributing, but they are not made robustly happy by withdrawing from the happiness bank. Robust happiness requires integrity and selflessness. This is why a person would want to pass on their happiness to others and to contribute to the happiness bank. It is not they are obligated to do so, but that they are virtuously motivated to do so.

There might be some *prima facie* disadvantages to the idea of the happiness bank. For example, it might encourage free-riding of the goodness of the community. It might emphasize the help of strangers over that of loved ones. Selflessness might encourage self-abnegation and a lack of genuine humility. I don't believe these disadvantages are significant. I respond to them here, in my discussion of humility in chapter 4 (page 62) and in my discussion of free-riding above..

Is it ethically justifiable to make a withdrawal from the happiness bank if one is not already "in credit" with it from having contributed to it oneself? This very much depends upon what one does

next. It is ethically wrong to exploit the good wishes and the aid of others without being willing, if able, to reciprocate. How does the happiness bank accommodate the common preference to be helped by a loved one rather than someone who is a total stranger? Most people would under normal circumstances find it difficult to take in, for example, an uncle who has cancer. This is a hard burden for any family or individual to bear. The happiness bank ameliorates this situation.. Many people may contribute as they are able to, because they know they have received so much from the society they have benefitted from. Also they desire to give back to the others in this selfless regard which in turn gives them a sense of integrity. This 'happiness bank' is not designed to overtax any individual. Everyone contributes and shares the burden for all who are in need. Our preference to be helped by those who to are close to us is compatible with this, but the limits of what individuals can do for each other must also be recognized. Sometimes a community is needed to share the burden and this is the fundamental idea of the happiness bank.

Ethics alone could not build this vision the happiness bank entails. Withdrawing and depositing alone will not build the edifice. It is the vision of the virtuous action itself that makes the happiness bank a human aspiration. The things one deposits only for oneself are somehow lost in a self-centered sea of humanity. However, the rightful deposits made in the name of a frail, ill, hurt or down trodden person are never lost, but are lasting in a high percentage bearing account that is used by others. These examples of bonds may be drawn out when needed to convince others that the bank indeed works. The things that count as a savings deposit are any actions one takes towards others that show compassion and are beneficial in nature to people. By doing this we are showing the common good of humanity. It could be said that this happiness bank is reciprocal in nature, whether the person holding the passbook is depositing or withdrawing, as long as the account is active for other possible members. The reason is these accumulated dividends of savings and investments are vital to people and hold a very high value in relation to any other account.

Happiness need not be just a fond memory of a time gone by, but may become part of one's lifestyle. Furthermore, happiness need not be used up in a day but as a way of life, may be drawn upon like a bank account. Therefore, when a person continues to deposit into the happiness bank in a selfless manner they know these investments are not just for them but for anyone who may be in need.

## **THE HAPPINESS BANK AND CONTEMPORARY VIRTUE ETHICS**

In this section, I will compare my concept of the happiness with some contemporary writing on happiness and virtue. In her paper “Happiness as Achievement” Julia Annas is critical of the idea of happiness as desire satisfaction. I think she is right to be critical. She writes:

The idea that happiness is desire-satisfaction seems suitably neutral on the content of happy lives, allowing happiness to the intellectual and the incurious alike as long as they are getting what they desire. It is possible to think of happiness as desire-satisfaction if we are prepared to think of happiness ... as something on which each of us is in authority. I am happy if I think I am, since I am getting what I want. For who could be a better authority than I am on the issue of whether I am getting what I want? (Annas, 2004, p. 46)

Annas goes on to cite examples of people who might fit the category, like Nelson Mandela, Madonna and Bill Gates, and notes that there would be no grounds to compare the happiness of their lives as long as each is getting what they want. But since it makes sense to say that one person can be happier than another even if both are getting what they want, happiness is not simply about getting what you want. People may think they are happy on the surface, however, they can be wrong. According to my account of happiness, a person who thinks wrongly that they are happy is wrong because they are working with a false concept of happiness. This false concept doesn't hold up on a long-term basis. A person can get what they want, but if they want the wrong sorts of things, this will bring misery. If their happiness depends upon always getting what they want, it is a fragile thing. On the other hand, if a person is genuinely happy, if their happiness is based on their contributions to the happiness bank, their happiness will be robust. Selflessness is the key. To be happy is not to get what one wants for oneself, but to be absorbed into the good of others and to be focused on others, not oneself.

On my account of happiness, a person is likely to be authoritative about their own happiness provided they have the correct idea of happiness and are not self-deceived about their motives. A genuinely happy person will know perfectly well that they are happy, because they



will know that their life is based on selfless concern for others. This is something one can be authoritative about. Integrity can be gleaned from this way of life, so integrity is also something one can be authoritative about. The reason I disagree with the Annas' account of happiness is because of the selflessness factor. We cannot hold this happiness only for ourselves, it must be given away to others, and in this case in the form of a bank, for us to keep it, our achievement of happiness must be a shared account in life.

Is Annas correct to think of happiness as an achievement? Annas writes that "happiness has an essential connection with my life as a whole and the thought that happiness is an achievement on my part." (Annas, 2004, p. 47) So is Annas right to think that it is an achievement of the whole of a life? This is Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia*. But even if we put it on the scale of a lifetime, happiness can vary over time. It isn't a property of the whole of a life. It is something one must work for: thinking of others first and foremost. So it is an achievement, but it is not a whole of life achievement. It is the achievement of selfless integrity itself. Imagine a person who constantly works to selflessly help others, but who, for one reason or another, is never successful in making others happy or consoling them. Are they happy? I think they are. Annas, and Aristotle, would think they are not. My reason for thinking they are happy is that from their own point of view they are selflessly absorbed in the good of others and take deep satisfaction from this. And they really are selfless absorbed in the good of others.

Consider a person who thinks they are actually being selfless but really are not. For example, they spend their days caring for an ill relative, and in this case, instead of genuinely helping the relative, they enjoy the power and control they have over her and they enable her continuing illness rather than helping her overcome it. Are they happy? I think not because they are not really absorbed in the good of others, they are merely pretending to themselves that they are. They are contented, to a degree, but not happy. They fail to make contributions to the happiness bank; and they have no happiness bank to make withdrawals from. People in this situation tend to become very isolated.

Annas is right to insist that we are not just happy because we are getting what we want. Happiness is much more than that. It is nonetheless a state of mind. This state of mind only exists because the virtues exist, doing the right thing exists and as a result a good life exists. The happiness bank changes one's way of thinking and life. As I mentioned earlier, I think that the missing ingredient in Annas' account of happiness is selflessness. This is what makes the

difference between a type of arrival formula of happiness, in which one arrives at happiness as a final destination, and a never ending selfless struggle that holds up under all conditions. Human self-centeredness can be easily be pointed towards the wrong kind of objectives. Turned inside out into selflessness we become more concerned with others and their needs.

In the Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy article on ‘Virtue Ethics’ by Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove, Hursthouse and Pettigrove state all the “usual versions of virtue ethics agree that living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for Eudaimonia” (2016, p. 4). The constant working of the virtues gives one the best chance at a happy, well lived life. Although things such a fate, chance or luck may intervene, one will find throughout this process that the key is to not own one’s own life. That is, the key is to live for others, not for oneself. This turns out to be the best life possible. In my opinion it also makes it the easiest way to be a contributor to the happiness bank. The reason is as follows.

To grow as a human being and build character is not something that may be done in isolation or through self-centered behavior. To develop selflessness, integrity and to work towards the virtues as a life goal, could take a lifetime to achieve. We begin to get a glimpse of a promising life ahead. We find we are no longer self-centered and greedy or at least markedly better than we might have been.

According to Hursthouse and Pettigrove’s article, “Eudaimonism in virtue ethics is the view that the good life is the *eudaimon* because the virtues are those character traits that benefit their possessor ...barring bad luck. (2016, p. 5) This contrasts with two other theories of virtue ethics: pluralism and naturalism. According to pluralism, “the good life is the morally meritorious life, and the morally meritorious life is one that is response to the demands of the world...” (2016, p.5). There are many things that might make a trait virtuous and there is no reason to think that they all produce happiness or eudaimonia. Naturalism is the view that virtues are forms of natural human excellence; to be virtuous is to be a *good* human being in the way that a *good* alligator might be good, i.e. good at being an alligator. Excellence doesn’t necessarily produce happiness.

Being virtuous, in my view, leads one to selfless concern for others and conduct in accord with this. Selflessness – one that involves living with integrity with ourselves and the world around us – all but guarantees happiness. Unhappiness is caused, by and large, by excessive self-centeredness. Without it, happiness is relatively easy to come by. So a truly virtuous person will

almost certainly be happy. Eudaimonists differ about their idea of happiness; the most valuable idea of happiness is one that leads to deep enjoyment of life, a lack of self-pity and anxiety and a positive attitude to life. One gets this justification from one's contribution to the happiness bank. And in times of difficulty, one gets help and consolation from the happiness bank that is from one's community.

Hursthouse and Pettigrove write:

It is the exercise of the virtues during one's life that is held to be at least partially constitutive of Eudaimonia, and this is consistent with recognizing that bad luck may land the virtuous agent in circumstances that require her to give up her life. Given the sorts of considerations that courageous, honest, loyal, charitable people wholeheartedly recognize as reasons for action, they may find themselves compelled to face danger for a worthwhile end, to speak out in someone's defense, or refuse to reveal the names of their comrades, even when they know that this will inevitably lead to their execution, to share their last crust and face starvation. On the view that the exercise of the virtues is necessary but not sufficient for Eudaimonia, such cases are described as those in which the virtuous agent sees that, as things have unfortunately turned out, *eudaimonia* is not possible for them. (2016, p. 8).

If we think of eudaimonia as a complete condition of a life, this makes good sense. But if we think of happiness instead, and think of happiness as deep enjoyment of life, a positive attitude, and an absence of anxiety, then even people who are about to sacrifice their life can be happy.

The exercise of the virtues and a willingness to make sacrifices in the face of danger becomes an inspiration for others. Examples of this noted earlier in this thesis include Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and Abraham Lincoln.

Hursthouse and Pettigrove write:

It is for me, not for you, to pronounce on whether I am happy, or on whether my life, as a whole, has been a happy one, for, barring,

perhaps, advanced cases of self-deception and the suppression of unconscious misery, if I think I am happy then I am – it is not something I can be wrong about. Contrast my being healthy or flourishing. Here we have no difficulty in recognizing that I might think I was healthy, either physically or psychologically, or think that I was flourishing and just be plain wrong. In this respect “flourishing” is a better translation than “happiness”. It is all too easy for me to be mistaken about whether my life is eudaimon (the adjective from eudaimonia) not simply because it is easy to deceive oneself, but because it is easy to have a mistaken conception of Eudaimonia, or what it is to live well as a human being, believing it to consist largely in physical pleasure or luxury for example. (2016, p.14)

Eudaimonia differentiates from happiness in the respect that happiness arises out of a general concern for the welfare of other people first and foremost. This concern for others isn't the same thing as flourishing. Nonetheless, we can be mistaken about our own happiness in cases when it involves only ourselves and our desires. If it doesn't involve the good of a second or third person, it is a false happiness. If we mistakenly think we are being selfless when we are not, as in the case above the care-giver, we can be wrong about our own happiness. In the case of the snow-skier, the appearance of happiness was misleading. Happiness is not real if it can vanish so easily. It is when I am concerned with others and their happiness, the happiness bank fills. I will not be mistaken about my happiness when I see the results of what living well is, when I put others ahead of my own wants and desires. Happiness will have found me.

Aristotle, like Aquinas, believes virtuous activity will point us towards happiness, but Aristotle thinks it will bring good fortune as well, and will lead us to become a good and noble citizens and be well regarded among our peers. However, in Aristotle's time his peers were the elite in society. The down trodden, down on their luck, would have no happiness bank to turn to if they relied upon their gaining the regard of the elite. There is no end strategy in this life when it comes to happiness, but happiness is a byproduct of living a life of integrity and selflessness. Therefore, it is best not to search for happiness as an end result in life. In the same way, it is best

not to search for the good opinions of others as an end result. Happiness arises out of our putting others' lives ahead of our own. The good opinion of others is worthless unless it is based on this foundation. Someone who manages to be perfectly selfless, and does so with integrity, cannot be unhappy. This is why I disagree with the version of Eudemonism described by Hursthouse and Pettigrove.

## CONCLUSION

Let me summarize the view I have developed in this thesis. In chapter 1 I examined the virtue of integrity. In chapter 2 I set out my understanding of selflessness and put it in the context of utilitarianism and the demand to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number. In chapter 3 I explored MacIntyre's perception about virtues as a part of our own status as dependent rational animals. In chapter 4 I discussed Aristotle's views about distinctive human happiness or the good life and I examined Thomas Aquinas's view that happiness can be both human and divine. Divine happiness is our reward in the next life, according to Aquinas. This final chapter has been an attempt to bring all this together under the idea of the happiness bank and discover the link between happiness, integrity and selflessness. I have sought to establish that the key that unlocks the door to happiness is selflessness. I would claim that a person who fully achieves selflessness is very unlikely to be unhappy in life. The reason is simple. Unhappiness is a product of self-centeredness.

In *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre refers to the ill, the disabled, the infirmed and the down trodden. This became a major point of my happiness bank theme and just how it might work along with selflessness and integrity. At this point, however, I would like to add one more example of the happiness bank. There is a great urge to tackle youth unemployment rate worldwide. It has been said that whole generations may be lost to joblessness, types of desperation in inner cities or rural areas, and of course the migration crisis. This at a time in these young people's lives when they should have the opportunity to build these three pillars of integrity, selflessness and the virtues, which can lead to the good life and happiness. Instead of pushing these young people to the margins of society, the happiness bank is a better solution; a better beginning, instead of an endless pit of despair. This happiness bank may just be the force that can re-ignite their talents and enthusiasms. Through the use of the mentor program within the happiness bank, they can get a new start. This happiness bank for the twenty-first century is a

solution to this problem or at least the beginnings of such a solution. In this case it could not only be the lifting of these youthful, vibrant people from despair to a level in life far beyond their imagination. To work with others, with one common goal of integrity and selflessness and to bring one's community or nation to this remarkable way of life is a gift. This gift may or may not come from a higher authority. I leave the question of the metaphysical basis of any such authority to one side. Instead, I will talk about the evidence for this theory shortly. However, to return to the issue of youth unemployment and alienation: consider an historical example. In 1960 then President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy submitted by executive order the idea of a new army. However, this army would be the first of its kind and would be peaceful. This army was called the Peace Corps, and it was an entirely volunteer army. It would depend on mostly young people travelling to undeveloped, underprivileged nations. The idea Kennedy had was to help young people gain experiences, work and represent their country, help other people who were struggling, etc. The intended effect was to help people in other lands help themselves, and also to change young people's experiences and character forever. Kennedy believed that the freedom of the United States depended on other nations' ability to live in dignity and out of poverty. It sounds like a type of nation building happiness bank.

Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned the problem of youth unemployment, pushing young people to desperation and the margins of society. An extreme form of this is found in the prevalence of solitary confinement within the U.S. prison system (and other systems to a lesser extent).

Lisa Guenther in her article 'The Concrete Abyss' has written about this prevalence. She offers a phenomenological account of the experience of solitary confinement.

1. "We are social beings who rely on our interactions with other people to make sense of things" this also forms our perception of the world. (2014, p. 3)
2. Most prisoners who live in isolation fly in the face of what is necessary for fully human existence, that Martin Heidegger describes in 'Being and Time (1927) where he says, "we exist

as being-in-the-world, in a complex interrelation with a situation to which we have been thrown". (2014, p. 3)

3. Phenomenology can make this web of relations visible, even the simplest everyday experiences. (2014, p. 3)

In Guenther's experience with prisoners who have been subjected to prolonged isolation, the five senses become no longer a recognizable human characteristic. In fact many of these long-term isolated prisoners claim to have become invisible as a human or to be caught in a living death. It is possible to reduce the life of a person to such an extent, that happiness is no longer possible for them and they no longer feel fully human. Among many, I agree that living in the answer could help solve many of the human race's perplexities. We simply must communicate and try to fix systems that are broken. Sometimes they are too much to handle. However, one must make a start. The happiness bank is necessary if we are to make such a start.

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